FERRETS BOB FOR RAISINS! – SEE PG 16!

Modern FERRET™

THE FERRET LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

For ferret owners. By ferret owners.™

ISSUE# 10

- Training deaf ferrets
- The story of Berret
- Ferrets in hotels
- Giardia alert

& FUN FUN FUN!

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Why not ask for Eight In One's exceptional ferret products at your local pet store? They're attitude adjustments for even the most fickle ferret.

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Welcome to Issue #10 of the never-ending ferret love story...

He loves me...
He loves my snot...

He loves me...
He loves my snot...

Minding Your Own Business™

Mary and Sabrina

The Modern Staff:

Mary Shefferman - Editor-in-Chief
Eric Shefferman - Designer
- being fuzzy -
Sabrina
Ralph
Marshmallow
Knuks
Trixie
Bosco da Gama
Rest in peace... Barnaby
- also helping -
Dr. Bruce Williams - Medical Editor
Ted Schiffman - Photography Editor

Modern Ferret, The Ferret Lifestyle Magazine, Frank 'n' Fritter, Wally Weasel, Ferretted Fairy-Tails, Minding Your Own Business, Doctor to Doctor, The Doctor Is In, Wide World of Ferrets, For ferret owners. By ferret owners., The Ferret Directory, The Ferret Trading Post, and Pink Noses are trademarks of Crunchy Concepts Inc. Other trademarks referenced herein are used in an editorial fashion only to the benefit of the owner, no infringement is intended.

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Advertisments for companies, products, and live animals are accepted in good faith. *Modern Ferret* assumes all advertisers are on the up-and-up and we cannot accept responsibility for the claims or actions of any advertiser. As any Brady Bunch fan knows, caveat emptor (let the buyer beware).

All offers/contests are void where prohibited, taxed, or otherwise frowned upon by the powers that be.

Front Cover: Photo by Eric Shefferman Featuring Sullivan Ballou courtesy of Linda and Russ Markert
Page 1: Photo by Eric Shefferman
A big THANK YOU to Amanda Leitl for being a good sport!

While browsing in a pet store the other day, I came upon a display of toys that were labeled for ferrets. There were hard plastic balls, some with bells in them, sisal-wrapped balls with beans sealed inside, balls made of wire, wheel-shaped toys, foam balls... Foam balls?

What's wrong with this picture? Well, intestinal blockage is one of the leading causes of death in ferrets. One of the most common causes of intestinal blockage is foam. So why are foam balls labeled for ferrets? Because the manufacturer either doesn't know any better or doesn't care. That's exactly why *you* have to know better and care more.

Never assume that a product (any kind of product: toy, food, treat, cage, bed etc.) is safe or appropriate for ferrets just because the label says it is. Many manufacturers are just beginning to make items specifically for ferrets. Some do their research and have the ferret's best interest in mind; others are not as concerned. Still others design their products based on outdated or wrong information.

What's a ferret owner to do? As consumers, we have an awful lot of power. When you go shopping for something for your ferret, ask yourself whether it is safe and appropriate for him. If a toy is made of foam, don't buy it. If a treat contains whole nuts and seeds (or seems better suited to rodents), don't buy it. If a food does not have an adequate percentage of meat protein, don't buy it. Support the companies and products that are appropriate for ferrets.

Keep in mind, too, that what is safe for one ferret can be a danger to another. Our Marshmallow, for example, might work at pulling apart a toy, thus making it dangerous; while Ralph would be content to simply carry it around. Staying in tune with your own ferrets' particular behaviors can help you choose the appropriate products for them.

If using your buying power isn't tactile enough for you, try the almighty pen (or keyboard). Make your letters brief and concise; rambling is a chore to read. Try to be polite and informative; no one listens when they're on the defensive. By letting companies know what they're doing wrong (and right), and what they might do to improve their products, we can help ensure that more of the products on the market are safe and appropriate for our pets.

They're our ferrets, let's watch over them.

— Mary

These numbers are for BUSINESS USE ONLY!

There is simply not enough time for individual advice/consultations over the phone. We cannot take orders by phone.

Phone: (516) 799-1364
FAX: (516) 797-4021
Internet: modferret@aol.com
ferrets@modernferret.com

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The little number next to the "EXP:" is the number of the last issue of your subscription. This way you can tell when you're getting near the last issue of your subscription (horror!). The best way to ensure that you never miss an issue of *Modern Ferret* is to make sure that you renew your subscription in a timely manner.

modern FERRET™

Vol. 2 No. 4

For ferret owners. By ferret owners.™

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SPLASH!

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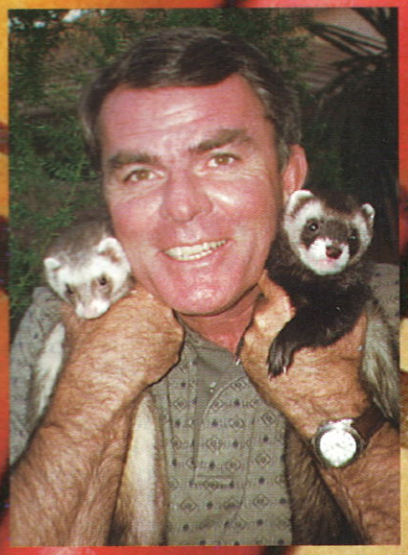
Pink Noses™

Lady & Rat Boy sleeping
by Yvonne Morrow
of Poughkeepsie NY

Close-up of Sammy
by Toni Freer of White Bear Lake MN

Jesse in a canister
by Diane Bekka
of Phoenix AZ

Brian and Sparky the ferret enjoying a swim
by Cathy Costello of Union NJ



Proud Dad with sons
Butch and Cody
by Barbara Petty of
Boca Raton FL

Fred and Ginger share their
favorite snack — a banana!
Photo by Chris Lang of Beverly MA

Minnie in the bath
by Molly Nilsson
of Huntington TX

Lucy is determined to
get into the clothes drawer!
Photo by Heather Kucan of
Kings Park NY

Dixie, Blondie, and Bear take a nap!
By Sue Anthony of Ronkonkoma NY

Pink Noses™
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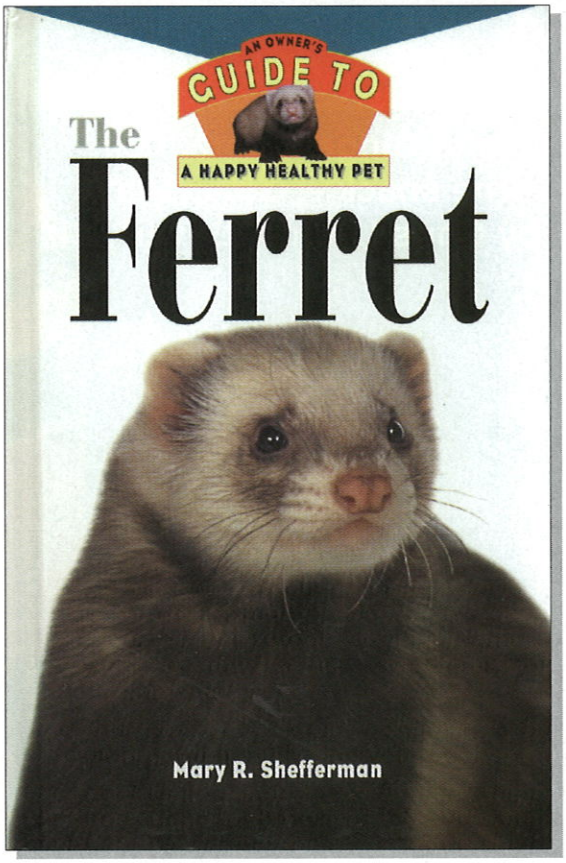
See contest
details on pg. 33

THE NEW FERRET BOOK

WRITTEN BY MARY R. SHEFFERMAN

EDITOR OF *MODERN FERRET* MAGAZINE



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Q: What are the symptoms of a life-threatening intestinal blockage?

When we first got ferrets, we wanted to learn everything we could about taking care of our furry kids (we still want to learn everything we can!). We searched everywhere for every bit of information we could find. Now we've created a book that collects everything on basic ferret care. It will be your resource for care information. It covers such topics as:

- The world according to the ferret
- Bringing your ferret home
- Feeding your ferret
- Grooming your ferret
- Keeping your ferret healthy
- Training and socializing your ferret and more!

SIGNED BY MARY! IF YOU REQUEST IT!

This hardcover reference is filled with information-packed tips and sidebars and nearly 100 professional-quality color photos, *The Ferret* is both enjoyable and easy to learn from.

A: From page 87 of *The Ferret: An Owner's Guide to a Happy Healthy Pet*:

Signs of intestinal blockage include vomiting, refusal to eat or decreased appetite, dehydration, absence of stool, small or "skinny" stool, straining, lethargy and depression. If you notice any of these symptoms, take your ferret to the vet immediately...

$12.95 per book plus a shipping & handling charge per book. Mary will happily sign your book for free, if you request it.

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Canada & Mexico	*$4.00 shipping per book*
Western Europe	*$8.00 shipping per book*
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Massapequa Park NY 11762 USA

IF YOU WANT YOUR BOOK SIGNED BY MARY, PLEASE REQUEST IT WITH YOUR ORDER! THANK YOU!

ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!

TRUST RALPH

BOX 338

Letters to *Modern Ferret*

Oddly enough, our address is: Modern Ferret · PO Box 338 · Massapequa Park, NY 11762

Dear Eric and Mary,

Can your readers imagine living in a state where ferrets are illegal? How would they feel about having their ferret taken from them, sent out of state to an unknown destination, or cruelly euthanized? They may then be ordered by the state to pay a fine of several thousand dollars for violating the law. Or, they may even face jail time for sharing their home and heart with one of these sweet, gentle creatures. This ridiculous scenario is not hypothetical for ferret owners in California, it's the reality.

California has been the site of a long, hard-fought battle for ferret legalization. We have come a long, long way toward achieving our goal. We now have over 20 co-authors for our legalization bill and each year receive more and more positive press coverage. But, we still have opposition from some powerful groups, and the fact that both of our legislative authors face term limitations is very much a concern to us. That is why your continued support and very generous donation of a page in this issue's *Modern Ferret* Magazine for California's WANTED poster is so deeply appreciated. It will help us alert and mobilize many of these underground ferret owners. It will also put the public on notice that a fundamental right, the right to share their home with the domesticated companion animal of their choosing, is being decided now in California.

I want to thank you and *Modern Ferret*, on behalf of the estimated 500,000+ (1989 figure from Department of Fish and Game) "California Convicts," and their estimated 250,000 owners, for your supporting ferret legalization in California, not just in words but in deeds. Ferret lovers in California have a valued and special friend in the Sheffermans!

Sincerely,
Jeanne Carley
Californians for Ferret Legalization

Editor's Note: It's our pleasure to help where ferrets are concerned — after all, we're ferret owners! We hope California legalizes ferrets soon and we encourage all our California readers to get involved in the effort — now is the time!

Hi — I'm a charter subscriber to *Modern Ferret*. I've had ferrets since Jan. 16, 1984. I'm on my 12th & 13th ferrets now. All these years I've collected every article and fact I could find on these endearing little things. You are a most welcome beautiful magazine!

The pictures and articles are superb! Please be cautious about over-extending yourselves, though. I know you want to do as much as you can with *Modern Ferret*, but I'm afraid you'll burn out. you're still so young. How about making a list of goals where you have a few months grace incorporating more info before including anything else? Give yourselves a break and schedule your growth. You are too terrific and valuable to take on too much too soon. You need to stay in our lives forever!!

Big smiles and congratulations to you.
Susan R Burnley & Scout & Sebastian
Missouri

Editor's Note: Thank you for your concern. Eric and I do try to pace ourselves, but all sorts of unexpected things arise that we need to tend to immediately. We do get to take short breaks (like sneaking out in the middle of the day to see the Star Wars Trilogy — twice!), and the ferrets keep us in good spirits. — Mary.

Dear Mary,

I look forward to reading your book. I love *Modern Ferret* and think it is so wonderful that you guys "went for it" and are enjoying such success!

I've shared my home with these adorable guys since 1985 and can't imagine how I lived without them. They are the best! Your magazine fills a very necessary & important niche.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,
Barb Youngquist
Illinois

Dear Eric, Mary, and the Modern Ferrets,

Thanks for introducing me to the M&M dispenser machine (issue #7). I got one for my ferret, Slinky, and he mastered it in three ten-minute sessions. He does not like Kix though. So instead I use Pounce tarter control cat treats (tuna flavor). He also seems to like your magazine a lot too.

Sincerely,
Adrienne & Slinky Frederick
Michigan

Dear Mary and Eric,

I got your new book for Christmas and I love it! It has lots of good information and pictures. I also love your magazine. It is very informative, and helped me a lot when I first got my ferrets because we don't have a lot of ferret stuff down here.

Thank you!
Stephanie Riegle, Andi and Elmo (the ferrets)

The Ferret Directory™

Dear Readers:

We cannot handle all your calls. PLEASE use the resources you see on these pages for your ferret care questions.

Our daily lives consist of:

- Fighting with printers who don't deliver the magazine properly (despite having taken our money).
- Fighting with distributors who owe us thousands of dollars but don't feel like paying us.
- Living under miserable conditions where we have insufficient living space and our ferrets are not welcome — until we have enough money to live somewhere else.
- Attempting to do the work of an entire magazine staff with just 2 people.

And more. We CANNOT take calls from you asking how to litter train your ferret or teach him a trick — that's why Mary wrote the book (see pg. 6). We need to devote our time and energy to publishing the magazine so that everyone (not just those who call) can benefit.

National & International Organizations

American Ferret Association, Inc. (AFA)
PO Box 3986
Frederick MD 21705
1-888-FERRET-1 (toll free)
Goals: Promote, Protect & Provide for the domestic ferret.
Source of ferret related information from the country's leading ferret experts.
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See events calendar for AFA events.

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STARFeret@aol.com
FREE listing of your state's ferret clubs, shelters, vets, & resources for self-addressed stamped long (#10) envelope. Quarterly newsletter $12.00/yr. Shelter and ferret business starter package $3.00.

For advertising information ONLY contact: (516) 799-1364 Mailbox 3

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SUPPORT THE ADVERTISERS THAT SUPPORT MODERN FERRET!

Advertising information for The Ferret Directory™

For **National & International Organizations**, call us at 516-799-1364 for information.

For **Clubs**, **Breeders**, and **Shelters & Rescues** advertising in The Ferret Directory™:

A **Basic Listing** includes:
- Name of club, breeder, or shelter
- Contact person
- Address
- Phone number
- E-mail address

Note: If you do not want your address or phone number published, please let us know. We recommend that you do publish your city and state so ferret owners will know if you are nearby. Please let US know your address and number so we can send you a copy of the issue containing your ad or contact you.

Pricing for Basic Listings:

Clubs: **$30** per issue
Breeders: **$30** per issue
Shelters/Rescues: **$20** per issue
Additional words are available at **$1** per word.

Payment is due with the advertising copy.
Pre-pay for 5 issues and the 6th issue is free.
Take a display ad also and receive a free "See our ad on page XX" in your listing.

Send advertising to:
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Massapequa Park NY 11762-0338

The Ferret Directory™

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Big Apple Ferrets
PO Box 411
Bellmore NY 11710
(212) 388-8652

New York Ferret's Rights Advocacy
David J Guthartz
94 Jeffery Lane
Oceanside NY 11572
(516) 536-6615

Virginia

Loudoun Area Ferret Fanciers, Inc. (LAFF)
Dina Callow, President
PO Box 5441
Herndon VA 20172
(540) 364-4811
Largest active ferret club in Northern Virginia, memberships nationwide. Quarterly newsletter, *LAFF Lines*. Sponsors high quality, well attended championship ferret shows twice yearly (see events calendar). Semi-monthly meetings, annual Fun Match, picnics & educational seminars/ demos. $20 annual membership (LAFF event and product discounts).

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FAX (703) 777-3247
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Marathon Shores FL
33052-2863
(305) 289-7378

Illinois

F.A.I.R. Ferret Shelter
Mary Van Dahm, Director
Westchester IL 60154
(708) 681-3181

New Hampshire

Ferret Wise Rescue & Rehabilitation Shelter
Alicia or Dino Drakiotes
PO Box 561
Marlborough NH 03455-0561
(603) 876-4975
ferretwise@top.monad.net
Quality adoptions to qualified homes. Foster placements on occasion.

New York

T 'N' T Ferret Rescue & Shelter
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Bellmore NY 11710
(516) 826-4065

Ohio

Ferret Sense
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Buckeye Lake OH 43008
(614) 929-3392

Ferrets Unlimited
Jean
4116 Bucyrus Ave
Cleveland OH 44109
(216) 749-3885
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Pennsylvania

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Shelters & Rescues (cont.)

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FAX (703) 777-3247
jbferret@mindspring.com
No-kill ferret shelter. Rescue, placement & referrals. Adoptees available, Fervac-D CDV current. Ferrets will not be shipped. Information available, send long SASE.

FOR A SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION SAVINGS OFFER, SEE THE BACK INSIDE COVER!

On the following pages:

Page 11
California Legalization Poster
Make copies of this poster & write letters to help California legalize ferrets.

Page 12
Medical History
Copy this page for each of your ferrets to help keep track of each one's medical history.

Page 13 & 14
Sweetest Little Angel/Devil
You can fill in your ferret's name on both sides of this award. You can then hang it with the appropriate side facing out (& change it as necessary!).

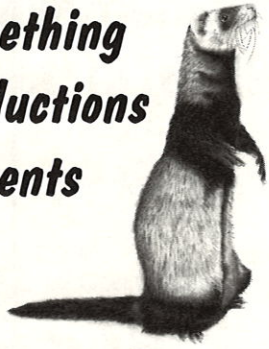
ATTENTION CALIFORNIANS!
HELP LEGALIZE FERRETS IN CALIFORNIA NOW!

We need your help to legalize ferrets in California. A bill in the State Assembly has been introduced to legalize ferrets, and your State Representatives need to hear from you, your family, and your friends. You can find out who represents you in Sacramento by looking at the blue Government pages of your local phone book, or by dialing 411 and asking for the county registrar of voters.

After writing your own letters, you can help spread the word about the ferret legalization efforts underway. Fill in the information on your State Representatives at the bottom of the WANTED poster on the opposite page. Photocopy the poster and distribute it to local pet stores and veterinarians' offices. Give copies to family members, friends, and co-workers and ask them to write letters to their lawmakers telling them to vote yes on AB 363. Each letter you generate represents 100 constituents in the eyes of these lawmakers!

Come on Californians. Ferret legalization is not going to happen without your help. For more information contact <ferretnews@aol.com> or call Jeanne Carley at (415) 851-3750.

Something Productions presents



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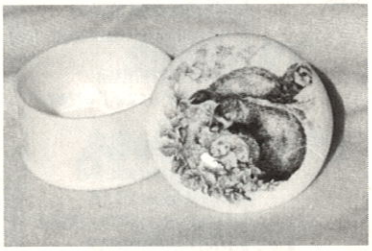

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❑ 101

❑ 102

❑ 103

❑ 104

5" by 7" color mini prints
$5.00 each + $3.00 S&H
Set of 4 $18.00 + $3.00 S&H

WHOLESALE INQUIRIES

What's Your Color? **poster (seen on page 21) and prints above are available for wholesale. MAJOR discounts on quantity purchases.**

Ferrets are prohibited in California. But did you know that California is home to over 500,000 ferrets by the California Department of Fish and Game's own 1989 estimate? Did you know that a national ferret magazine rates California among it's top three states for numbers of individual subscriptions? Did you know that there are five ferret organizations, clubs, or associations in California? Clearly, the domesticated ferret is here to stay. And it should be a legal member of the many families that own one.

All domesticated pets are considered by law to be an individual's private property, property the government has no right to seize without due process. The only reason ferrets are prohibited in California is because they appear in a list of prohibited *wildlife*! That's right! Our Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has misclassified ferrets as wild, hurting thousands of good people by turning them into criminals in their disregard for the truth. DFG also wastes millions of dollars harassing citizens owning a *domesticated* pet that is safer to the environment and people than the cat or dog.

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You can help change this absurd law. Write the legislators below. Tell them it's time for California to join the rest of the country and the world by legalizing the domesticated ferret. Tell them to stop wasting precious tax-payer dollars and (even more precious) governmental good will, by penalizing good Californians who own, and love, ferrets. If no names appear, call your county registrar of voters (dial 411) to find out who represents you in Sacramento. Fill in the information, photocopy the form and distribute it to pet stores and veterinarians' offices. You can also help by making a contribution to *Californians for Ferret Legalization*, sponsors of the bill to legalize ferrets in California. Help us right a serious wrong. Contact Californians for Ferret Legalization, 410 Mtn. Home Road, Woodside, CA, 94062. To find out what else to do, call (415) 851-3750. Or e-mail ferretnews @ aol.com. Pass this form on to a friend.

Write your representatives now—tell them to vote yes on AB 363.

Hon. State Assemblymember _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Hon. State Senator _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Californians for Ferret Legalization 410 Mountain Home Road Woodside CA 94062 (415) 851-3750

Ferret Medical History Worksheet

Keeping a medical history on hand for each of your ferrets can help you or someone else who is taking care of your ferrets handle an emergency situation better. We recommend keeping this information near your ferrets along with your vaccination records. Please make copies of this page as needed.
— *Modern Ferret* Magazine

Ferret's Name _____

Owner's Name _____

Owner's Phone # _____

Ferret's date of birth _____
(approximate) (this never changes, making it easier to figure out how old the ferret is)

Note: Ferrets require yearly Canine Distemper vaccinations for their own protection (it is highly contagious & fatal to ferrets). Yearly rabies vaccinations are recommended. Contact your veterinarian for more information.

Checkup & vaccination history (note anything unusual)

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Date_____Weight_____Vaccination(s)_____

Known allergies/reactions _____

_____

Surgeries performed _____

_____

Medical conditions _____

_____

Medications currently being administered & schedule _____

_____

_____

Additional notes _____

_____

_____

EMERGENCY NUMBERS & INFO

_____
Regular Veterinarian

_____
Phone # of Regular Veterinarian

_____
Name and Address of Animal Hospital

_____
Phone # of local 24 hr veterinary facility that will see ferrets

_____
Address of local 24 hr veterinary facility that will see ferrets

_____
Name & Phone # of a local experienced ferret owner(s) who can answer questions

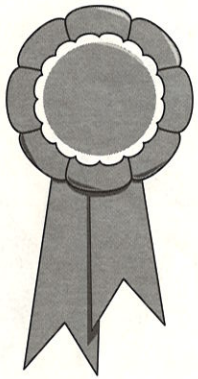
_____
The National Animal Poison Control Center — 24 hr service by veterinarians

1-900-680-0000
($20 for the first 5 minutes, $2.95 for each additional minute)
1-800-548-2423
($30/case, credit cards only)

This form was provided by *Modern Ferret* Magazine to help ferret owners everywhere. Please make as many copies of it as you need.

Modern Ferret Magazine

Sweetest Little Angel



It is hereby confirmed

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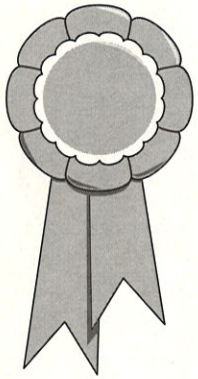
is a spectacular ferret in all ways and duly qualifies as a "Sweetest Little Angel" with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and honors appropriate to the title.

Mary R. Scheffenson

Modern Ferret Magazine

MODERN FERRET MAGAZINE

Sweetest Little Devil



IT IS HEREBY CONFIRMED

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IS A SPECTACULAR FERRET IN ALL WAYS AND DULY QUALIFIES AS A "SWEETEST LITTLE DEVIL" WITH ALL THE RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES, IMMUNITIES, AND HONORS APPROPRIATE TO THE TITLE.

Mary K. Sheffenson

MODERN FERRET MAGAZINE

Shakers & Movers

What Ferret Clubs & Rescues are saying about *Totally Ferret*®

"I am delighted that *Totally Ferret*® is doing so well - at last - in Northern VA."
Carol K., President
LAFF Organization

"We at Ferret Wise have you makers of *Totally Ferret*® to thank. Otis weighed in at a mere 15.5 oz. on arrival. At the date of his adoption, he was 2.5 lbs. His current weight is 3.5. Hats off to *Totally Ferret*®."
Alicia Drakiotes
Ferret Wise Rescue & Shelter, NH

"I immediately noticed a decrease in waste in the litter pans. During lactation, my jill reared 15 kits with no supplements & survived this nursing load in fine condition. No hair loss while nursing & the kits are exceptional in coat quality & size."
Diane R., President
Baltimore Ferret Club, MD

"Ferrets on *Totally Ferret*® food have more energy! Ferrets that spent their days sleeping... are running and jumping all over the house!!! Performance Foods has brought sunshine into the lives of 18 'little heads'."
Alan & Beverly B.
Little Heads Rescue, KY

"Thank you for such a fine product. There are other foods for ferrets on the market, some of which we caution against, but yours always comes highly recommended."
Pamela G., Director
The Ferrets of Pet Pals, VA

"After an adjustment period of straight *Totally Ferret*®, the ferrets began eating around 50% less."
Debbie R., President
Ferret Lovers of NY

"The size and shape is perfect for the ferret mouth."
Sally Heber, President
American Ferret Association

"I've been a ferret rescuer in CA since 1988 & have seen many picky eaters. Farrin is such a ferret. Guess what?!? She loves *Totally Ferret*®. She has put on weight and her coat looks good. I forgot to mention that Farrin is 7 years old. Thank you *Totally Ferret*®."
Margaret & her CA Outlaws

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BOBBING

text and photos by Christine Code

Kai learns to go underwater.

Gus goes for it!

Kai got his treat!

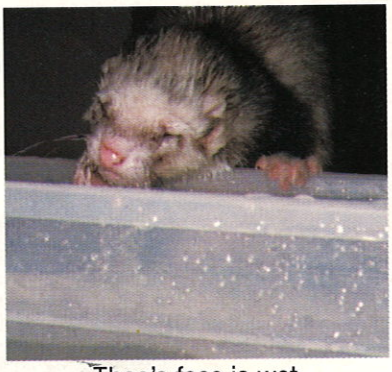
A lot of splashing going on!

Where'd his nose go?

Gus is watching Theo underwater.

This is fun!

Theo is searching for a treat!



Theo's face is wet.

He's up to his ears in it!

FOR RAISINS

Augustus Ferret hears the bathtub filling with water, and scampers down the hall into the bathroom. He jumps up onto the side of the tub, then down into the bathtub. The water comes up to his shoulders already, so I turn off the tap and watch my little aqua-ferret wade through the water.

Gus surveys the tub, then looks at me as if to say, "are there any raisins in here?" The furry adventurer sticks his head underwater, and searches from side to side for anything that might be good to eat. Tail floating behind him, he wades around the tub, looking for sunken treasure.

I open the cupboard and take two raisins from a jar. After breaking the raisins in half, I drop them in the deep end of the bathtub, near the plug. Gussy sees me, and he's thrilled. Off to the deep end he goes, paws barely touching the bottom. After several dives he finds the first raisin, and gobbles it down. A few more dives and he's found all of the raisin pieces, and eaten every one.

What can be cuter than a ferret diving for raisins? My raisin-diving ferrets charm our visitors, and they make me chuckle every time. It's especially amusing when Augustus, Theodore, and Kai all stick their heads underwater at the same time, competing for treats.

Would you like to teach your fuzzy friend how to bob or dive for raisins? Here are the steps to follow in order to develop this skill.

Begin by finding a treat your ferret loves. If raisins aren't a favorite, find some other treat which sinks. Here I'll assume that you're using raisins.

Now try placing a raisin in your ferret's water bowl. The water shouldn't be very deep. You might find that your ferret will grab that raisin, even though it's slightly underwater. If so, you've got it easy. Simply increase the water depth just a little bit every time you offer a raisin, until eventually your ferret is sticking his whole head underwater. Then you'll want to graduate to a bigger bowl with deeper water.

Another method involves submerging your hand in water, in order to offer wet raisins to your ferret. For this you'll need a big water dish — big enough so that your whole hand can fit inside. Try a large casserole dish or plastic container.

Rest your hand on the surface of the water, palm facing up. Place a raisin in your hand, and have your fuzzy take the raisin. Next time do the same thing, but submerge your hand just a tiny bit so that the raisin is slightly wet.

You'll want to submerge your hand just a little bit more each time you offer a raisin. Eventually, your hand will be pressed to the bottom of the water dish, and your ferret will have to go through three or four inches of water in order to get the raisin.

Now that the skill is established, you simply have to remove your hand and get your ferret to retrieve an underwater raisin on his own. At first your furry friend might not understand that there can still be a raisin in the water even if your hand isn't submerged. In that case, place the raisin toward the side of your palm, and eventually beside your hand on the bottom of the dish. As the distance between the raisin and your hand increases each time, your ferret will begin to learn that the raisin and your hand are separate things.

Reinforce this new skill by giving your ferret some practice time every day until bobbing for raisins is a habit.

You may eventually find that your ferret will hunt around underwater even when there are no raisins in sight, as if to say, "feed me!" If your water dish is big enough, your ferret might climb right into the dish to raisin-hunt.

It's easy to transfer this skill to the bathtub. Start with just an inch of water in the tub, or even no water at all. Once your ferret is sticking his head underwater to retrieve raisins in the bathtub, gradually increase the water depth. You'll now have a raisin-diving ferret.

As you follow this training plan, remember to keep practice sessions short, reward each small improvement, and be patient. If you practice regularly and encourage your ferret, you're likely to have a water-ferret hunting for raisins in your bathtub very soon.

Christine Code is owned by five ferrets: Madeline, Theodore, Kai, Augustus, and Mocha. Christine teaches Internet classes in Vancouver, Canada, and is president of the Greater Vancouver Ferret Association. Christine's ferret pages are on the web at:
http://www.ferret.net

One note about raisins: they're a treat for ferrets, but your fuzzy shouldn't have more than a couple of raisins each day. Cut your raisins in half or in quarters to make it seem like there are more of them.

Ferrets in... Hotel Rooms

by Mary R. Shefferman

At one time or another ferret owners find themselves on the road with their ferrets. Some travel to ferret shows, others to visit friends or relatives. No matter who or what you're going to see, you may have to stay in a hotel room with your little furry charges. There are several things you'll want to think about as you prepare to travel as well as when you are on the road.

It is always best to keep your ferrets in a carrier or small "travel-size" cage when you are traveling by car. This way, they will have all the comforts of home (food, bed, litter box) and won't risk getting caught under the brake pedal or disappearing at a rest stop. Most ferrets travel well and will sleep for a good portion of the trip.

After traveling all day, your ferrets will probably want to have a little exercise time. To make sure your ferrets' stay is comfortable and safe, here are several pointers based on our traveling experience.

Regardless of the size of your ferrets' play area at home, you will want to restrict them in a hotel room. Traveling ferret owners have reported finding fist-sized holes behind headboards and night stands in hotel rooms. They've also told of plumbing cut-outs in closet walls and easy ferret access to heating vents through radiators. Do yourself and your ferrets a favor and create a small area that is easy to make safe. Remember that all you did to ferret-proof your home has **not** been done in a hotel room.

Mary wheeling the *Modern Ferret* crew down a hotel hallway.

Many hotel and motel rooms have entryways that lend themselves to being blocked off from the main part of the room. If you set up this area as a play area for the ferrets, you will find it easier to ferret-proof quickly. If possible, bring a piece of sturdy cardboard or thin wood (like door-skin) to block off the area. Alternatively, you can use the room's desk or table, tipped on its side, to block the area. If you do this, remember to put the furniture back where you found it.

Before you let your ferrets out to play, make sure there are no holes in the walls or floors. Check the crack under the door (ferrets can fit through any space they can get their heads through). If it is too large, stuff a towel into the space, but make sure you supervise, because an industrious ferret can and will get past a towel. If there is a closet within this area, make sure there are no holes in it. If the closet does have holes, keep it closed.

ANIMAL CONNECTION

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Marylou
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Check that carpeting is secure along all edges so your ferrets can't get under it or tear off a piece of it. If you have a ferret that tends to dig at carpeting, make an extra effort to prevent any damage.

Keep in mind that others have used the room before you. Check for food, candy, or wrappers that housekeeping might have missed. Also keep an eye out for rat or mouse traps or bug poisons (like roach or ant baits). It may not be pleasant to have to consider these things, but your ferret's life may depend on it.

If blocking off an area of the room is not possible, or if there are too many hazards (holes, for example), there is another option. Many traveling ferret owners carefully check the bathroom for holes or other dangers and, if the coast is clear, allow their ferrets to exercise there. Make sure to keep the toilet lid closed and keep soap, shampoo, and complimentary shower caps and shoe polish cloths out of your ferrets' reach. Check the floor for any spilled cleaning chemicals or drips from the toilet. Again, remember that the bathroom needs to be ferret-proofed from scratch.

If you have a ferret that is particularly energetic, put a harness and leash on him and jog up and down the hotel corridor a few times. When all else fails, this will usually do the job of quieting him down.

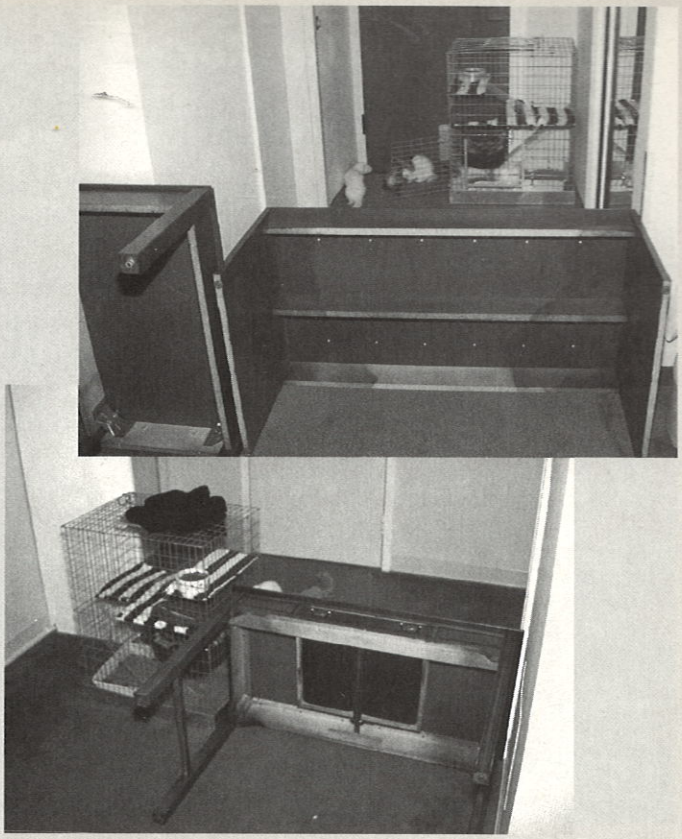
Remember that the hotel room isn't home, so keep a very close eye on your ferrets. If there is a hazard in the room, count on your ferrets to find it. Bits of paper, foam, food wrappers, or pillow stuffing could be lurking under beds, dressers, or other furniture. Some hotel rooms have convertible couches or other "moving" furniture that a ferret could easily find his way into.

When you bring pets to a hotel, you're usually assigned one of the room reserved for vacationers with pets. This means your ferrets will probably notice some unfamiliar animal smells (dogs, cats) in addition to the strange surroundings. Try to bring some things so your ferrets feel at home. If they have a special bed, blanket, or toy, bring it. Anything that smells like your ferrets will make them feel more at home and less stressed. If you have a ferret that is particularly uncomfortable, you might want to ferret-safe the bathroom, where there are less things that might have picked up the smell of another vacationer's pet.

In addition to toys, you will want to bring water from home or bottled water. Ferrets can get intestinal upset when their diet — including water — is changed too suddenly. Make the trip easier on your ferret by bringing bottles of water from home. If you can't do that, give them bottled spring water, which is less likely to cause an intestinal upset. Make sure that you bring plenty of your ferrets' food so you are prepared for unexpected delays. Another important item to pack is a roll of paper towels so you can clean up any "accidents" in the hotel room.

Last, but not least, help your ferrets be good little ambassadors. Remember that hotel personnel might be judging all ferrets based on your ferrets' behavior. Set a good example.

Bon Voyage!



We use hotel desks, night tables, the cage... Whatever we can find to block off a ferret-safe area

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FC-5: Tie Bar, 2" high	$10.50

PLAYFUL FERRET

FC-2: Pin, 2" wide	$8.95
FC-4: Earrings, 1 1/2" wide	$10.50
FC-6: Tie Bar, 2" wide	$10.50

VISA

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Travel Tips for the Modern Ferret "On The Go"

- Keep ferrets in a travel cage or carrier
- Alert housekeeping that you are traveling with your pets
- Watch for rat or mouse traps and ant or roach baits
- Check for holes in walls and access into heating/cooling system
- Look for ferret-sized gaps under doors, and block them off
- Prevent your ferrets from getting trapped under furniture (like beds)
- Remove any food, candy, or other trash left on the floor by previous guests
- Keep your ferrets away from convertible, rocking, or reclining furniture
- People will ask you about your ferrets — be ready to show how nice they are
- Clean up any mess your ferrets may make — leave a good impression!

Did you move?
Did the post office change your zip code?
Does your address label have an error?

Please let us know by WRITING to:
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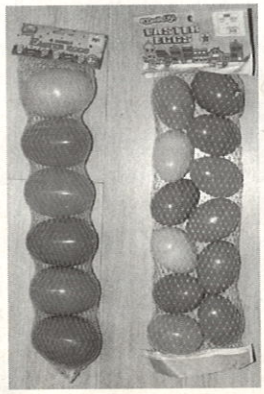
Address Changes
PO Box 338
Massapequa Park NY 11762-0338

Please mail your address changes
(don't phone or e-mail them) — Thanks!

Sabrina Says:

A very special kind of toy that you can usually find very cheaply this time of year is the plastic egg. Some ferrets like to push them with their noses, some like to sit on them and push them back into a corner, and some just like to pick up the egg halves and carry them to a special hiding place.

In any case, the eggs are generally made of hard plastic which won't break with rough ferret play and chewing. However, you should always watch the toys your ferret is playing with for signs of breakage or danger to your ferret.



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Shipping for 1 to 5 posters mix/match

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Mexico	$ 7.00 air	$4.00 surface
Western Europe	$10.00 air	$5.00 surface
Pacific Rim	$14.00 air	$5.00 surface

Foreign orders please specify air or surface.

FOR YOUR WALLS!

I told you they grow in cans!
20" by 30" full color poster featuring Sabrina and Bandette discovering a can of raisins!

What's Your Color?
24" by 36" full color poster featuring illustrations and descriptions of the most common ferret colorings.

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Front of Mug Design

Back of Mug Design

"BANDIT"
WANTED FOR:
Key swipin' Litterbox missin'
Glove poachin' Toe nibblin'
Sock stealin' Boot hidin'
Sheriff's warning:
BANDIT has perfected looking innocent and too cute to punish. He may try to convince you to give him a treat. BEWARE!

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$6.95 + shipping for one · $12.95 + shipping for two

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USA	$ 3.00	
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Mexico	$10.00 air	$6.00 surface
Western Europe	$17.00 air	$8.00 surface
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- If your order requires "No ferret markings," please let us know — the return address will be either Crunchy Concepts Inc. or Mary Shefferman/MFM.
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Funny Ferret Tricks

Here are this issue's batch of Funny Ferret Tricks. Does your ferret do something special for a treat? Does he make you laugh? Tell us all about it, and you could win a Ferretude T-shirt from Eight in One Pet Products, not to mention your 15 minutes of fame. See the Contests Page (pg. 33) for more details!

GRAND PRIZE WINNER!

Flipping for Raisins
by Traci Kutler & Jeff Dodd of Ohio
Ferret: Natasha Kinski

We are quite certain we have the smartest ferret around, so we decided to teach her to flip. All we used was a raisin and stick (pencil, twig or finger will do). We used a large stick for the photos so you could see her more easily. Natasha learned this trick in about 10 days. In addition, she knows how to lie down on command, roll over, and, of course, beg too.

1) The first step was easy, we got Natasha to beg (high on her toes) and worked on her balance. (photo 1)

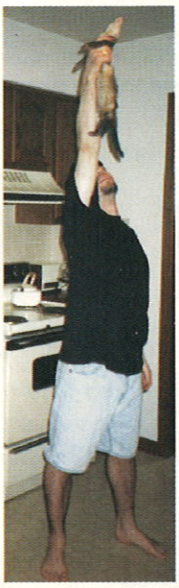
2) Second we gradually got her to follow a raisin over the stick (always keeping the raisin out of eating distance). After just a few tries she was pushing off the ground all on her own. (photos 2 and 3)

3) Once Natasha was comfortable with following the raisin, we worked on her laying on her back with the raisin close by. The hardest part was teaching her to learn the patience to lie on her back without eating the raisin. Now she waits patiently for the raisin and a little tummy rub. (photo 4)

by Sherri McBride of Florida
Ferret: Nosey

Nosey is my 6-month-old male sable. (We also have a female silver mitt named Trouble and three cats.) Nosey's favorite treat of all times is dry cat food! Every day I feed the cats and put the cat food on top of my dresser (out of reach of their little hands). Every day Nosey sits there and watches, trying to figure out a way to get up there. Well he finally did it. Trouble opened my dresser drawer (she loves to sleep on my clothes) and Nosey saw this as his opportunity. He climbed in and up the inside of my dresser. Then he opened the top drawer and climbed on top of the dresser and into the 5 lb. bag of dry cat food. And as you can imagine, before I could get to him, it was all over the place. Needless to say, I now keep the cat food in a closed Tupperware container! But every day, Nosey continues to climb to the top of the dresser and waits for his treat.

by Jana Bardach of Indiana
Ferret: Jasmine



Anyone who has shared with a ferret may know that ferrets are angels. They come here to teach us about love and to give us love. I take in homeless ferrets and have had nine all together, and they were, and are, all angels. But Jasmine, my son's ferret, is the only ferret we've ever had that is constantly looking at her brethren ferret angels in the skies. No matter what she is doing — if she's lying on the floor, exploring, or if we're holding her, she looks up. There is nothing there that we can see, but she does.

Here is a picture of my son, Ryan, and Jasmine. Jasmine looks like she's "reaching for the stars." I think ferrets are our souls on four furry short legs.

WIN!WIN!WIN!WIN!WIN!WIN!

WIN THIS T-SHIRT!

ENTER THE FUNNY FERRET TRICKS CONTEST TODAY!
SEE PAGE 33 FOR DETAILS!

Kim C. Duncan of New York
Ferret: Ghost

All ferret owners are familiar with the way a ferret gets attention by biting on the cage door to make a lot of noise.

Our ferret Ghost, a male silver mitt, started this soon after we got him. Our dog Feather, a tiny Chihuahua, would charge the cage snapping and snarling and nipping at Ghost until he stopped.

Ghost would not be silenced. Ghost learned that if he stood at the cage door and raised himself up to his full height his head would touch the ladder to the next level.

Now Ghost stands in front of the door doing leg bends and stretches causing the ladder to bang up and down. I swear Ghost grins at the dog while doing it, as Feather can only sit outside the cage and grumble.

Bubbles Bubbles Everywhere
by Samantha Rosier & Erich Pfaffinger of Nevada
Ferrets: Sneezers & Cosmo

When we first "adopted" our first ferret, Sneezers, almost a year and a half ago, we had no idea what we were getting ourselves into. We loved her playful ways and her wonderful personality so much that we had to get a play buddy, Cosmo, who she fell in love with the moment she saw him. We never realized how animals could have such unique personalities. We can get hours of entertainment from just watching those two tumble around and play together. But when Cosmo goes to sleep, it's time for Sneezers to get into mischief. One night, shortly after Samantha took a bubble bath, we were sitting in the living room watching TV, when we heard a loud thump come from the bathroom. And what did we see when we turned on the lights?! SNEEZERS covered from head to toe in bubbles. The funny thing was, she loved it, couldn't get enough of it. She hates baths but she loves bubbles. Now, whenever we take a bath she waits on the edge of the bathtub until all the water drains out, and then proceeds in for playtime in the bubbles.

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8 in 1

adrenocortical adenoma

As seen above, Sabrina is fine now and has grown back her coat.

In the pictures to the right, you can see how thin her hair was, especially at the base of her tail.

Sabrina's Adrenal Surgery

by Mary R. Shefferman

It started with a slightly sparse, coarse coat. A questionable thinning at the shoulder blades. I almost thought I didn't see the pink of skin peeking through Sabrina's rough fur. The changes were barely perceptible. Perhaps that's why I dismissed them as the imaginings of my worried-parent paranoia. But somewhere in the back of my mind, I knew by the middle of last spring that Sabrina was beginning to show the signs of hyperadrenocorticoidism — adrenal disease. I just couldn't bring myself to say it or believe it.

Yes, she was four years old. Her fur was undeniably rough. We called it a "crappy" coat change. It would pass,

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we were sure. She did not have the expected classic symptoms; no bald spot at the base of her tail, no swollen vulva, no lethargy. We gave her a little extra Ferretone and waited.

It was nearly summer when Sabrina's coat changed back to its normal softness and fullness. But soon after, the tell-tale signs began. The fur at the base of her tail started thinning. She had had thin fur on her tail before as a result of blackheads, but this was different. This was adrenal disease, and we could no longer deny it.

The first thing I did was feel guilty that I hadn't acknowledged the earlier signs: the rough fur, the thinning at the shoulders. Why didn't I act at the very first inkling? I'm human, and humans tend to deny things they don't want to believe. It isn't even a conscious effort; denial just sort of happens. A lot of people feel they "should have" known or recognized some sign or symptom, but the truth is that most of the time there was no way they could have. If hindsight is 20/20, foresight is often blind.

In the vast majority of cases (but not all), adrenal disease does not become life-threatening very quickly. Knowing this, we began running tests on Sabrina even though we were certain that she had adrenal disease. Although many veterinarians make a diagnosis of adrenal disease based on the collection of symptoms (hair loss pattern, swollen vulva in females, return to sexual behavior in neutered males, lethargy, etc.), some prefer to have more "hard" evidence. Often, if the veterinarian suggests surgery, the ferret's owner wants to see test results that show surgery is needed. Because adrenal disease is extremely common in ferrets, we decided to run all the currently available tests so we could talk about our experience here, with our readers.

The first test was the University of Tennessee Ferret Adrenal test. If a ferret has adrenal disease, the affected gland will secrete specific hormones (see the test results on the following page), thus increasing the levels of these hormones in the ferret's blood. The test measures the amounts of these specific hormones. This test is special because it is very sensitive; the blood values that are routinely checked by labs do not measure for these hormones. The slightly frustrating part about this test is that it is run only at a certain time of month; therefore, getting the results back can take a few weeks. In addition to the usual time factor, there was an unexplained delay in getting Sabrina's results (Dr. Horowitz, our veterinarian, said it usually goes more smoothly). When we finally did get the results, they weren't very telling. Some of her values were higher than normal, others were only slightly above the normal range.

The next test was ultrasound. Ultrasound can be used to confirm an enlarged adrenal gland, but not to rule it out. That means that even if the ultrasound is negative, your ferret could still have adrenal disease. Some veterinarians feel that the ultrasound isn't a very helpful test, but others prefer to gather all possible information before they diagnose or treat a patient. Sabrina's test was negative. The veterinarian who performed the test recommended a re-test in 6 months.

By this time, Sabrina was beginning to have a bald patch at the base of her tail, and we felt we had waited long enough. We decided that Sabrina should have surgery. Her fur was thinning all over, especially on her back, throat, and back feet, though she did not have a swollen vulva. She was sleeping more, she was itchy, and she had even begun to lose a little weight.

For several different reasons, we decided to have Sabrina's surgery done by Dr. Charlie Weiss in Potomac, Maryland. Dr. Weiss performs several surgeries each week and was also collecting data for a study on adrenal disease in ferrets. We scheduled the surgery to coincide with a ferret show in Maryland. A week before the surgery, Sabrina had a full blood panel to make sure she was in good health.

On the day of the surgery, we separated Sabrina from the other ferrets and took away her food and water at about 8 am. Ferrets do not need to be fasted for more than 6 hours before surgery. When we dropped off Sabrina, we left some food and water from home in case she felt like eating or drinking when she came out of surgery.

Sabrina was up and about soon after she awoke from the anesthesia. Dr. Weiss called us to let us know it went well and that all of Sabrina's other organs looked OK. When we returned from dinner that evening, there was a message from Dr. Weiss that Sabrina was doing great. When Sabrina was returned to us the next day, she was very alert and eating (and pooping) pretty normally for a ferret who had just had surgery.

Sabrina's stitches healed well, but it took a while for her fur to grow back. Though, once it started to grow, it grew in within a few days. Then her whole coat got very soft and she stopped being itchy. Now she's full of energy. We never really considered her lethargic until she got her energy back. At nearly 5 years old, Sabrina rough-houses with all the other ferrets again. Sabrina's lack of activity occurred gradually, while the increase in energy occurred over a couple of weeks. Sabrina is also up to 1.6 lb. from about 1 lb. at surgery. Whenever I look at Sabrina now, I'm glad that we had the surgery done. She seems to be a much happier ferret.

Adrenal disease can be treated. Veterinarians are currently working on non-surgical ways to treat this common problem. If your ferret is going bald, see your veterinarian. There's something you can do to help.

Sabrina is her furry, playful self again and spends her time keeping the kits in line

SABRINA'S CASE

by Charles Weiss, DVM

A 4.5-year-old spayed female chocolate ferret was presented for adrenal surgery. Her symptoms included bilaterally symmetrical alopecia, lethargy, and muscle loss over a 2–3 month period. The hair loss was present on the tail, dorsal lumbar back (rump over the base of the tail) and on the tops of the rear feet. Several weeks prior she had a thinning of the hair between her shoulder blades which eventually grew back. The lethargy was noticed as a decrease in playing time. Tests performed prior to referral include bloodwork (Table), abdominal radiographs, and ultrasound. The radiographs and ultrasound results were unremarkable, with no abnormalities noticed.

Exploratory surgery was performed following preoperative subcutaneous fluids, intramuscular dexamethasone, and induction and maintenance with Isoflurane anesthesia. Pulse oximetry and EKG monitors were used intraoperatively. A 2.5 cm left adrenal tumor was removed and biopsied. The right adrenal, pancreas, liver, kidneys, and lymph nodes all appeared grossly normal. Postoperatively oral amoxicillin was dispensed for 14 days.

Histopathology results revealed an adrenocortical adenoma. Two weeks postoperatively a marked increase in activity was noticed. Seven weeks postoperatively hair regrowth began in the areas of previous hair loss.

Dr. Charles Weiss currently treats 10–20 ferrets weekly. In his practice, adrenal gland tumors are the most common type of tumor seen in the ferret. Dr. Weiss regularly writes ferret medical and surgical articles, and has lectured at veterinary conferences on ferret-related topics. Dr. Weiss also consults with practicing veterinarians nationwide on ferret medical and surgical conditions.

Dr. Weiss practices at the Potomac Animal Hospital, 10020 River Rd., Potomac, MD 20854; phone: 301-299-4142.

Results of University of Tennessee Ferret Adrenal Test (8/96)

Test (units)	Sabrina's Results	Normal Values mean/median
Cortisol (nmol/l)	71.5	52.9/32.2
Androstenedione (nmol/l)	11.62	6.6/6.3
Estradiol (pmol/l)	197.1	106.5/118.2
Progesterone (nmol/l)	0.16	2.2/0.9
DHEAS (nmol/l)	2.3	10.0/6.0
17 a-Hydroxy-Progesterone (nmol/l)	0.12	0.2/0.1

Recommendation: "Estradiol is elevated, but not as high as many are. Androstenedione is upper normal. Rest are okay. Possibly hypercorticoid based on the estradiol. Decision is to do surgery based on the estradiol result or re-check in 6 months for evidence of disease progression."

Ultrasound Report (9/30/96):
"The liver, gall bladder, spleen, kidneys, GI tract & urinary bladder appear normal. Both adrenal glands are normal in size. No mass is seen. A) Normal study. B) Follow clinically. Re-scan in 6 months."

Sabrina right after her surgery. Her fur has since grown in to fully cover her belly.

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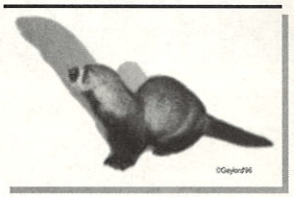

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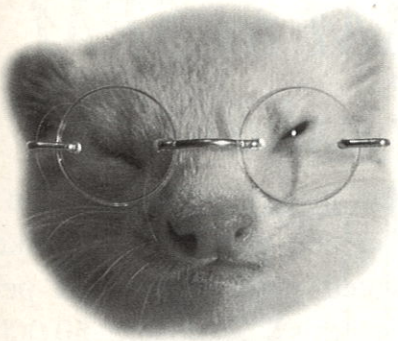

Marshmallow Explains It All

Shiver Me Timbers!

Ferrets are warm-blooded creatures; our normal temperature is approximately 102□. But when we go to sleep, our temperature drops. That's one of the reasons we like to huddle together in a pile. When we wake up, we need to bring ourselves back up to normal. How do we do this? We shiver.

When I get out of hammock in the morning, I yawn and stretch a lot. I also do quite a bit of shivering. Shivering is how ferrets — and humans — warm themselves up. If, for example, you pick up your sleeping ferret and, in the process, wake him up, he will shiver. Some humans think this means the ferret is frightened. Nope. He's just chilly. If a ferret is frightened, he will usually stay very still (some less cultured ferrets might nip). The same is true for greeting your ferret as soon as you walk in the door after work or school. If your hands are cold and you pick up your warm ferret — whether he's asleep or awake — he will shiver. You might want to warm up those icy hands before you go picking up an unsuspecting toasty ferret. I know your ferret will thank you for it.

As for waking up sleeping ferrets, you might want to do it very gently. How many humans would tolerate being pulled out of a cozy bed? "Not I," you say. Now imagine if you were in a cozy bed all curled up with a bunch of warm fuzzy ferrets. See what I mean? Pick us up gently and keep us warm until we wake up.

Some of you more observant humans might notice that we ferrets sometimes shiver when we get a treat. For some of us this is just unbridled excitement. If we could eat the treat and do the happy dance (which I'll explain in a future column) at the same time, we would. Since we can't, we shiver. With other ferrets, if you pay close attention, you'll notice that they shiver when the human giving the treats is holding them with cold hands.

That's it until next time.

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Sabrina Says:

Litter box moving is a favorite sport among many ferrets. In most cases, it is harmless. But other times, the ferrets might dump out the contents of the litter box, creating a mess. Owners tend to disapprove of such activity. Especially since they are the ones who have to clean up the mess.

If the bottom of the ferret's cage is flat (not wire mesh), there is a solution — Velcro. All you have to do is use the Velcro to firmly attach the litter box to the bottom of the cage. It doesn't even take a lot of Velcro to make the litter box into an immovable object. Here's how:

1. Cut off two 4-inch lengths of the loop part and two 4-inch lengths of the fuzzy part of the Velcro, and attach the loop parts to the fuzzy parts. Make sure the inside bottom of the cage and the bottom of litter box are clean.
2. Remove the paper backing from the loop side of the Velcro and stick the Velcro onto the short end of the bottom of the litter box. Do the same with the other length of Velcro.
3. Remove the remaining paper backing so the bottom of the litter box has two exposed sticky sides. Stick the litter box onto the bottom of the cage in the place where you want it to stay. Press firmly so the adhesive sticks to the cage bottom.
4. Pull up on the litter box. Now the two strips of fuzzy Velcro should be stuck to the inside bottom of the cage and the two loop strips should be stuck to the bottom of the litter box — and they should line up perfectly.

If your ferret can still move the litter box, add two more 4-inch strips of Velcro on each side of the bottom of the litter box (so all four sides have Velcro strips). If your ferret can still move the litter box, you need to get the concrete model!

Thanks to Nina Trischitta of Long Island, NY for this great tip!

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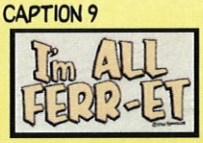

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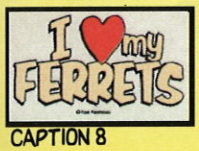

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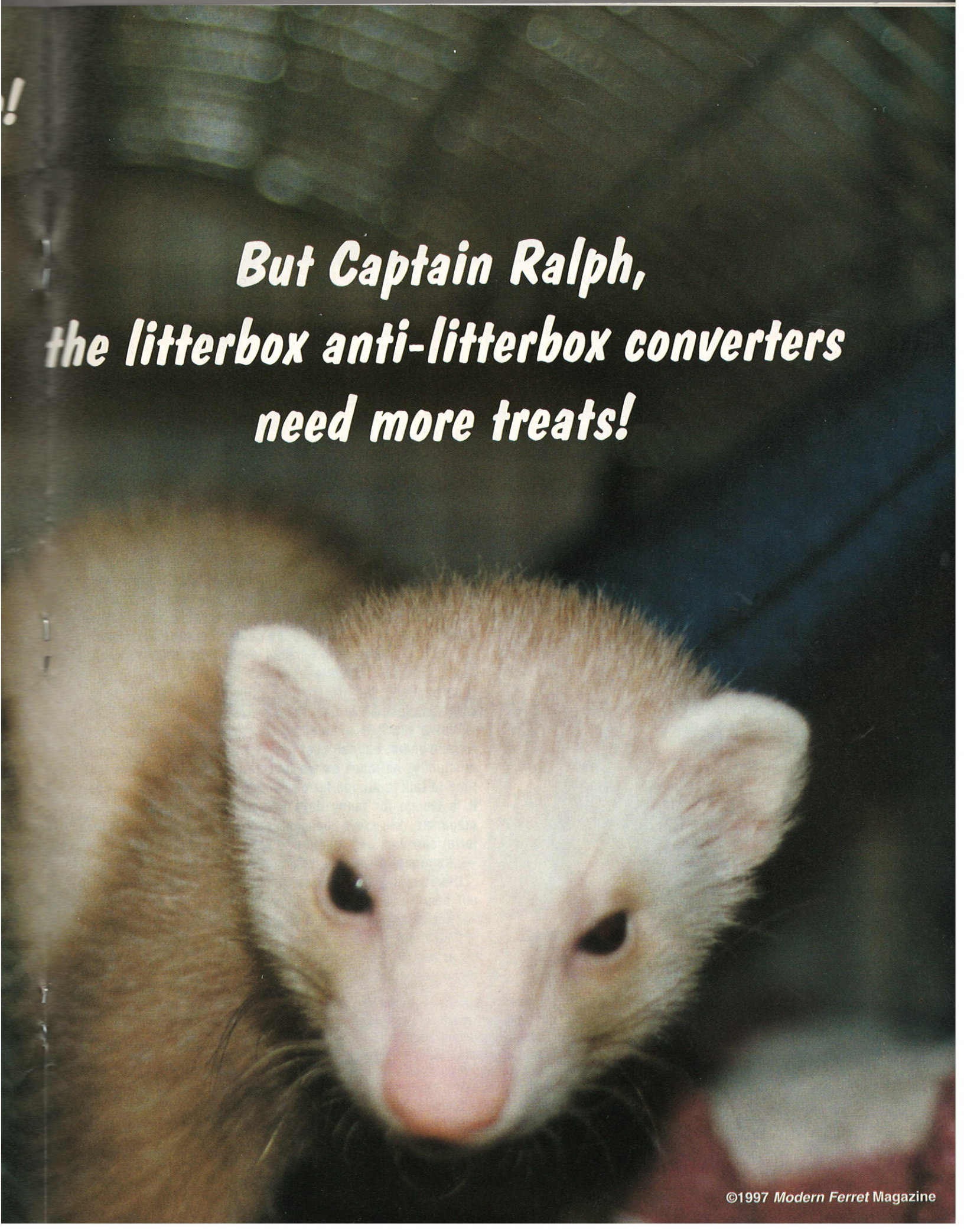

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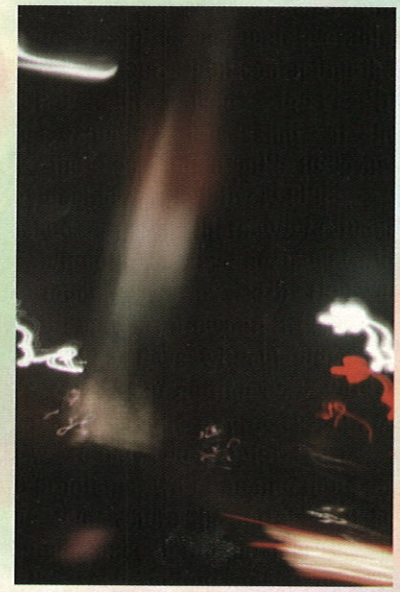
Minding Your Own Business™ Part 2

On the road again to another ferret show — Ralph checks out where we're going.

A "business" is the term for a group of ferrets, or in our case, a group of ferrets who write about ferrets!

Sabrina says,
"I just LOVE to wrap myself in furs, daahling..."

Washington DC at night — our best man, John Alexander, was driving us through DC. This was the first time Eric was ever in DC, so here are his photos of some of the famous places we passed.



Dear Readers:
Here we are at issue #10! Here's an update:

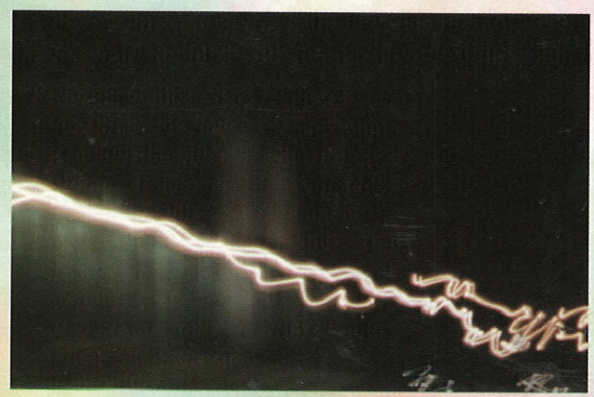
We've switched printers again for #10. This is the 5th company to print for us — we are hoping they'll do a good job and we won't have to keep switching. It's a big pain.

The Post Office keeps being a major source of problems. Apparently, they felt that it would be easier to return lots of copies of issue #8 to us as undeliverable rather than bothering to deliver them. Upon contacting the subscribers, we found that they hadn't moved — the Post Office just said they did to expedite processing of holiday mail. Unfortunately, the Post Office bills us over $3 for each magazine they decide not to deliver...

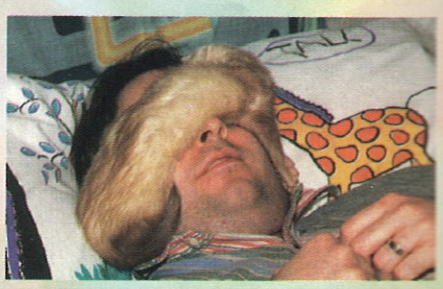
We've reached a point where we're reaching a lot of ferret owners, but don't yet have enough $ to run everything efficiently. As much as we love ferrets, we don't have the time to talk to all you ferret owners who keep calling — as it is we go for many days without sleep to produce the magazine. We can't keep getting calls 24 hours a day for ferret care tips and manage to produce an entire magazine — remember we're only two people!

Despite the problems, we're hoping to be able to move to our own place soon where the ferrets will be welcome & we'll have enough space to run the business.

Check out the subscription special on the back inside cover and the back issues still available — your $ are what make this magazine possible! Thanks for your support!



No music this issue — there was no time for much of anything. (Though the theme song from "I Dream of Jeanie" [both versions] did go through Mary's head a lot.)
Inspirational TV: Seinfeld, The Dick Van Dyke Show, I Dream of Jeanie, The Munsters, Happy Days, Star Trek: The Next Generation and Deep Space 9.
Inspirational Movie: Star Wars



Trixie sleeping on Eric

Contests!

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Do you have a photogenic ferret? Your ferret's photo could be on the next *Modern Ferret* trading card (or here in the magazine)! Here's how:

*All ferrets, regardless of nose color, are eligible.

*Pick out your favorite glossy finish photo(s).

*Write the following information for each photo. Your name, address, phone number, and your ferret's name. Please be careful to not damage your photo - we've had problems with ink bleeding through photos or rubbing off onto other photos.

*If there's something special about your ferret you'd like to mention, please do so!

*We regret that due to the sheer volume of photos we receive, we will no longer be able to return photos.

*Any of your photos that are published become eligible to be on trading cards or other *Modern Ferret* productions.

*By entering the contest, you grant permission to *Modern Ferret* to use the photos. Credit to the photographer is, of course, given.

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READER ART

ART CONTEST

Rembrandt and Picasso may have fame, but YOU can get something they can't get — a $25 gift certificate to Discount Master! (And some fame in the ferret community.)

Break out the pencils, pens, paint, crayons, whatever! Please send us your original black and white or color pieces of ferret artwork. Any type of artwork is acceptable, as long as it features ferrets.

Contest entry grants *Modern Ferret* publication rights to the artwork. We will, unfortunately, not be able to return art submissions. If you have a special case/problem, please call us.

Please ship your art VERY carefully! Mail can sometimes be kinda' rough.

We will be running the Reader Art section in every issue of *Modern Ferret*, so keep sending in art! We'll run as many pieces as we can and the best submission from each issue will receive a $25 gift certificate from Discount Master Animal Care Catalog.

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FUNNY FERRET TRICKS

Humor Contest

Ferrets are pretty goofy creatures! Now we'd like to celebrate the ferret's comic nature with a humor contest. What lengths does your ferret go to for a treat? What funny predicaments has your ferret gotten into? You can show us by sending a photo or short story. We'll try to run as many as space permits.

*The top 5 entries received will win a Ferretude T-shirt and the best entry received will also get a $25 value of Eight in One ferret products which includes new ferret canned treats and ferret canned diet.

*Please make sure you provide the following information: Your name, address, phone number, and your ferret's name.

*We regret that due to the sheer volume of entries we receive, we will not be able to return entries.

*By entering the contest, you grant permission to *Modern Ferret* to use your submission in the magazine or related materials. In any usage, credit to the submittor will be given.

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Preventing Hairballs

by Karen Purcell, DVM

Spring is shedding time for all mammals, ferrets included. As they groom the loose hair from their coats, they eat a great deal of it. In the majority of ferrets, the amounts are small and spread out over time, so no problems occur. However, it is common in older ferrets for hairballs to form knotted masses in the stomach or intestines, causing a partial or complete obstruction.

There are several signals that your ferret has an obstruction. His activity level decreases, he has no appetite, and you may notice diarrhea. Most owners do not notice vomiting, but may see face rubbing, teeth grinding, and excessive salivation. However, if the hairball involves the stomach, vomiting will occur, especially right after eating. Severe acute obstructions can cause weakness and reluctance to move. Any signs of obstruction constitute an emergency situation. Most large or complete obstructions require surgical removal before irreversible damage to the intestines can occur. Your veterinarian will palpate the abdomen and, in many cases, will be able to feel an obstruction in the intestines. If there is any doubt, x-rays of the entire ferret will be taken to determine if and where an obstruction is present. Blood work may be done as well, especially if your ferret has been sick for several days, in order to correct for any damage to internal organs or the overall metabolism of your fuzzy.

Obviously, no one wants to have their ferret develop an obstruction. In order to prevent hairball problems in your ferret, it is important to set up a regular feeding of hairball remedy. These go by many names, such as Laxatone, Petromalt, Femalt etc. Most ferrets consider these products a treat, and will eat them readily from your hand or directly from the tube. (Be certain the tube is out of reach, because many ferrets will bite holes in the container to lick up the contents.) Feed approximately 1 inch per day per ferret in the shedding seasons (usually fall and spring).

Two of the hairball remedies on the market — Petromalt made by St. JON Pet Care, Harbor City, CA, and Laxatone made by EVSCO Pharmaceuticals, Buena, NJ.

Other activities will also cut down on hairball ingestion. It helps to brush your ferret regularly, at least twice weekly, to remove excess hair. Bathing your ferret more frequently in shedding season will also help. Change the bedding more frequently as well, as ferrets will eat hair from their surroundings, especially if it gets into their food.

The other main cause of obstructions in ferrets are foreign bodies, usually bits of rubber or plastic that the ferret has swallowed. Thorough ferret-proofing of your household and avoidance of rubber chew toys will help prevent your ferret from ingesting any foreign bodies.

Karen Purcell, DVM, is a 1992 graduate of Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine. She has owned and worked with ferrets since 1991, and currently has three in her household. Dr. Purcell is happy to answer questions from ferret owners, and often does so on the Internet Ferret Mailing List. She can be reached at Abbott Animal Hospital in Worcester, MA, or via e-mail at:

drkaren@world.std.com

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Integrating Ferrets:

Our experience adding Trixie and Bosco da Gama to Sabrina, Ralph, Marshmallow, and Knuks

Ralph now happily sleeps in a pile with the new kits

Getting a new ferret is always exciting, and this time we decided to be doubly exciting and add two ferrets at once!

To start them off, we kept Trixie and Bosco in a separate cage. This way we could introduce them to our other ferrets gradually and at the same time make sure they understood how to use a litter box before letting them loose in our big cage.

At first the kits were only allowed playtime in a sectioned off corner of the room. The big ferrets could come in and visit, but the kits had to stay where we could watch them. Often while the kits were out, the big ferrets would investigate the new smells in the kits' cage. Sometimes the big ferrets even went to sleep in the kit cage — we encouraged this, as it helped them all get used to each other's smells.

Once the kits seemed to understand the litter box concept, they were allowed free-roaming play time with the other ferrets — under supervision. For a while, Ralph would play very rough with the new kits — especially Bosco. Ralph is deaf (see page 38) so he can't hear when another ferret cries "Uncle!" Although Trixie is spunky and would always fight back, Bosco is a scaredy-ferret and would just cower and cry. Since Bosco didn't fight back, Ralph would just pin him and try to drag him around. We would separate them and try to distract Ralph. Ralph never drew blood or injured Bosco, he just scared Bosco a lot. Meanwhile, Sabrina and Knuks would play with Bosco, teaching him proper play-fighting technique and letting him get some moves on them so that he could gain confidence. Sabrina and Knuks really helped Bosco develop. At the same time, Sabrina (our oldest ferret) ably demonstrated why she is the top ferret of the group, pinning both Trixie and Bosco by the throat at various times. Although Sabrina didn't hurt them, she did let them know who was boss. When they were by themselves, Trixie and Bosco would wrestle all the time, building each other's skills. This kept them from antagonizing the older ferrets; but since they didn't have an older ferret setting limits to how hard they could play, it did encourage some bad habits. Both Trixie and Bosco have required extra nip training attention (see "Bringing Up Baby" in Issue #9) to remind them that they can't play that rough with people.

To encourage peaceful interactions, we often give everyone treats at the same time. When they're all happily crunching or licking at the same time, it's hard for them to think about fighting.

Eventually Bosco was able to handle himself around Ralph by running away. At this point we started keeping all the ferrets in the same cage when we were home to supervise. By now, Bosco was starting to put on some weight — he realized that he was nearly as big as Ralph. At this point, Bosco would actively fight back at Ralph. As soon as Bosco fought back, the friction between the two ended and they started sleeping next to each other all the time. This was a big change for Ralph — until the new kits he was usually a solitary sleeper. Now he often piles in with them. Ralph has also picked up the habit (pioneered by Bosco) of sleeping with his butt in the hammock and his head lying on the cage floor.

Although not every pair of ferrets will get along, making the introduction slow and gradual can help greatly.

Having two kits at the same time has made it easier on the older ferrets — when the older ferrets get tired the kits have each other to play with. On the other hand, it has meant twice as much effort for us in regard to litter box training, socializing, and supervising little mischief-makers. Since they are accustomed to rough play with each other, it has been a little harder to teach them to play gently with people. But it certainly has been lots of fun!

Licking Ferretone off a hand is a good community treat which teaches ferrets to lick hands while encouraging them to remain peaceful when next to each other — knowing that there are treats for everybody reminds them they are ALL special

Ralph sleeping with a protective arm around Trixie

Three noses sleep as one

For further information on introducing new ferrets, see "Why can't we all just get along?" *from* Modern Ferret *Issue* #4.

Ralphie Can You Hear Me?

Raising a Deaf Ferret

by Eric Shefferman

When we saw Ralph, we knew we wanted him. He was a beautiful, friendly kit with a big white stripe on his head. We brought him home and learned the hard way that giving a baby ferret food, litter, and a dish of water leads to a ferret covered with a sticky paste of food, litter, and water — but that's another story...

Ralph is our second ferret, and the first ferret we got as a kit (Sabrina was 6 months old when we got her), so we didn't know what to expect. He seemed fairly normal to us, at least as normal as ferrets get. As he grew, we started to wonder about some of his behaviors. Sometimes it seemed as though he just couldn't hear. When he played with Sabrina, he would sometimes get a little rough. Sabrina would start yelping her "That's enough" sound, but Ralph just wouldn't give up. For a while, we would put Bitter Apple on Sabrina's neck to discourage Ralph from rough play. Since Ralph wasn't drawing blood, we figured he was just overly energetic, and would grow out of this phase as long as he was given plenty of love and exercise.

We had Sabrina trained to come when we squeaked a squeaky toy (by giving her treats when she came running). Whenever we squeaked, both of them would come running. Yet when the two of them were playing chase, if Sabrina went out of sight around a corner, Ralph would often stop as if she had just vanished. We kept going back and forth as to whether or not we thought Ralph was deaf. We figured that everything is new to a kit, so it is often hard to get his attention. Trying to test Ralph for deafness was very difficult, since he would follow the slightest hand motion. We tried never to sneak up and surprise either of the ferrets, so we never discovered how easy it was to sneak up on Ralph.

Ralph carries his ball around with him as if it were his baby. He watches over it and carries it to the food bowl, sleeping area, etc. What he doesn't know is that it has a bell in it and the other ferrets can hear him carrying it around.

The event that finally clinched it for us was when Ralph was playing in the kitchen one day and knocked over a broom leaning against the wall. Mary was in the kitchen and was startled by the sound. I was across the house and was startled by the sound. The broom landed behind Ralph and he never noticed. From that point we knew that he was definitely deaf.

Further experience has shown that to test whether a ferret can hear you, you need something that will produce a loud, interesting sound (like the sound a squeaky makes) without requiring you to make an obvious motion. You have to make sure the ferret is looking the other way when you make the sound, then see if the ferret reacts. Ralph has always made up for his deafness by being alert to what he sees around him. For instance, he was always watchful for Sabrina making a beeline for a person. That meant that she was going for a treat, so he should follow (thus making us think he heard the call).

We now know that ferrets with white heads (panda), white stripes (blaze), or dark-eyed-white (not albino) ferrets are often (but not always) deaf — with the deafness being genetically linked to the white fur. Knuks, who is a dark-eyed-white (see the cover of issue #1 on page 56 for her striped coat pattern when she was a kit), is also deaf. Deaf ferrets present their own array of unique challenges. First, they obviously are

unaware when you are yelling at them. Thus you can't get their attention from across the room, and shouting "Ouch!" if they nip you won't help either. If a deaf ferret is behaving undesirably, like pooping in the wrong corner, you have to go to the ferret. For nip training, scruffing still works, as does Bitter Apple and cage time-outs (see issue #9). You'll want to monitor a deaf ferret's play with other ferrets — they don't expect that if they shout "Uncle!" the other ferret won't hear them. Once we realized that Ralph was playing too rough, too often, we starting putting some Bitter Apple on Sabrina's coat to discourage Ralph. Ralph would also lose Sabrina if he was chasing her and she turned a corner. For him, out of sight meant that she had disappeared. This gave her an opportunity to break off from him if he was getting too rough.

Deaf ferrets are very easy to sneak up on. We always try to move our hand into Ralph's field of vision before picking him up. This way he knows who it is. If you tap Ralph on his shoulder, he always turns around rapidly with his mouth open to see what tapped him. This can be a problem if a ferret bites out of fear. These ferrets should be handled with sensitivity. We've worked with Ralph enough that he knows to check that it's a ferret poking him before he bites back. We've always reassured him that people are very nice.

Ralph and Knuks are both very sound sleepers. Since noise doesn't wake them, you have to nudge them a few times to get them going. When you open the cage to let everyone out, you have to make sure you wake them or they'll sleep right though it. Once they're awake, they're very attentive — much more than our other ferrets.

Although the deafness is a handicap, it doesn't usually cause any problems. Ferrets get their food handed to them in a bowl, so deafness isn't a survival issue. The most serious thing is that you can't train the ferret to come to a special sound. This can be a real problem if the ferret goes to sleep in some hidden corner or accidentally gets outside. The best thing you can do is be especially careful watching over them and keep track of their favorite snooze spots.

Knuks is a darling spokes-ferret, adored by all who meet her. But she doesn't let it go to her head...

Getting the new kits, Trixie and Bosco, has been a very interesting experience for us. They both have very good hearing and are curious and sometimes frightened of each new sound. Crumpling a paper bag puts them into a frenzy. In contrast, Ralph and Knuks don't hear the bag and Sabrina and Marshmallow are both very easygoing about sounds (except vacuum cleaners). Bringing the ferrets out in public as we do for shows and events, Ralph and Knuks are always very easy to work with. Car horns, parrots squawking, kids shouting, and other loud noises don't bother them (they only respond to what they see) — making them much calmer and better spokes-ferrets. Their deafness even enables them to calmly sleep in the midst of chaos.

Since they are always watching us to see what we're doing, they actually pay more attention to us than the ferrets who can hear us but choose to ignore us.

When we were living in a split-level house, Ralph would always know when we were going up the few steps to the bedrooms. He would come charging across the house (the bedrooms and bathroom were off-limits). We don't know how he knew — vibrations or whatever — but he would always come running. He was always paying attention to what we were doing. We used to joke that he had to run right up to everything to get a good look — just in case it was Elvis.

Despite being deaf, Ralph was the easiest ferret to teach a trick. He is always watching us to see what we're doing, so it was easy to teach him to stand and beg for a treat when we gave a hand signal (see issue #5). By watching what Ralph did to get a treat, the other ferrets all learned the hand signal.

All in all, Ralph and Knuks both get along fine despite being deaf. Both required a bit of extra attention for training, but mostly just needed gentle understanding. Since they are always watching us to see what we're doing, they actually pay more attention to us than the ferrets who can hear us but choose to ignore us. Although they can't hear us tell them how much we love them, we say it anyway and are pretty sure they understand.

All in a day's work.
A *Modern Ferret* sleeping pile.

What Is Lurking In Your Fish Tank?

Hunting Down the Cause of *Giardia* Infection

by Joyce A. Bartlett

Sugar and Grr Grr

Cinna

Finley

This whole episode, this *mystery*, started as simple diarrhea that Sadie (nicknamed Grr Grr — short for "girl") had. I took her to our much beloved veterinarian Dr. Faith Chase (name changed to protect the harried). The diarrhea was not severe, just enough to cause concern. I wanted to know the cause.

Dr. Chase checked a stool specimen and announced that Grr Grr had *Giardia lamblia*. A very comical innocent-looking organism under the microscope, but one that can cause debilitating disease. In most incidents of infection, a mammal, bird, or human being does not show symptoms. If they do, usually the only sign of infection is diarrhea. It may be severe and brief, off-and-on, or chronic. It can even be projectile. Both times, Grr Grr's diarrhea was mild. The diarrhea can cause dehydration and weight loss. Prolonged cases can cause chronic wasting, ulcers, and malabsorption. Grr Grr's stools were dark, loose, and had little odor; but in many other cases the stools are light in color, have a bad odor, and have greater fat content due to malabsorption. Often, animals will exhibit flatulence, as Grr Grr did.

Studies in the lab have so far not proved that the type of *Giardia* that infects humans can be spread to companion animals, but still this remains controversial. Until this argument is settled, it is better to be safe than sorry, and consider it a public health hazard: a disease that can easily spread to humans, other ferrets, cats, and other companion animals through fecal-oral contact. Dr. Chase explained that because Grr Grr used the cats' litter box, they would also need treatment.

The fun was only beginning. Since *Giardia* form cysts that can live indefinitely on surfaces, I would have to isolate Grr Grr and keep her environment very clean so she would not reinfect herself through fecal-oral contact. The cute way they wipe their bottoms by dragging them along whatever surface is outside their litter box now posed a problem. You would think ferrets would learn the proper use for toilet paper, since they are known to use up all their little paws can reach. I would not only have to give her medication, Flagyl (metronidazole; GD Searle & Co), daily but also disinfect all the litter boxes and all the surfaces where she walked with one part Clorox (bleach) to nine parts water.

The Clorox is easily applied with an inexpensive spray bottle, sponge, or mop then left to dry for 15 minutes before rinsing one time. Before applying the Clorox solution, be sure any visible urine and stool is wiped off. If the surface can not be safely washed with Clorox, then hospital-strength Lysol Concentrate (Lehn & Fink Products), two teaspoons per quart of water, can be used. You can buy this at the grocery store. Apply the Lysol solution, allow to dry for 10 minutes and rinse well twice. The bedding and cage carpet need to be washed at the beginning and end of treatment. If the cage litter box usually sits on carpet, replace the carpet with linoleum during treatment.

Grr Grr hated being caged. I let her out for short play periods. I allowed her to play only in a small area that I could easily clean with the Lysol solution after play time. The area included the table with the fish tank on it. Grr Grr was delighted. I thought, "how could it hurt?" Here I was depriving her of her usual fun and freedom, how could I deny her favorite beverage — fish tank water? I could imagine her claiming it to be a gourmet delicacy, and that ours was of a very special vintage because a Betta (Siamese fighting fish) swam in it. I hadn't told her, but guess what else it does in the water. I figured people eat sushi so she would be safe drinking fish tank water.

The treatment period ended and again Grr Grr's stool was checked. She still had *Giardia*. So another round of Flagyl, isolation, and disinfecting

started. Surely this time she would be cleared of *Giardia*. But this was not to be.

At the end of the second round, her stool was still positive. Dr. Chase said that there are some ferrets that chronically carry *Giardia*. Even though her diarrhea had cleared up, she would still need treatment because having *Giardia* would be debilitating to her and a public health problem. Grr Grr was becoming very unhappy and would shake whenever I picked her up, thinking it was medication time again. I was determined to do everything right so she would clear up and her life would get back to normal.

I thought again about what Dr. Chase and other experts had said about contaminated water and other sources of infection. Had we been camping? Did we have well water? Had she been outside and drank from a stagnant puddle of water? Had she been playing in the hamster or pet rat cage? It is not uncommon for hamsters and other rodents to carry *Giardia*. The answer was "no" to all the questions.

A friend of mine, who is a Public Health Nurse, had told me that once there was another type of diarrhea epidemic at a day-care center and that it was a nightmare because it spread easily among a group of young children. When would **my nightmare** end?

Then it hit me! **What about the fish tank water**? I called Dr. Chase. She was not there, but her partner was. She argued that the fish tank water was not stagnant because of the filter pump. I agreed but added that it was a closed system, and that the filter's pores were too large to trap *Giardia*. Also I had fed the Betta mosquito larva collected from stagnant puddles. Some of the water most likely got added to the aquarium at the same time and could have been contaminated with fecal material from the wildlife in the yard. She thought a minute then decided to send a fish tank water specimen to the North Carolina State University Veterinary Laboratory to be tested, and to consult with the fish aquarium expert at the school.

The results came back that my fish tank contained two organisms that are also protozoa that do not look like *Giardia* under the microscope — *Hexamita* and *Spironucleus*. They also provided the Flagyl protocol used for treating a fish tank contaminated with *Hexamita*. Hopefully it would kill any *Giardia*. A negative test for *Giardia* does not always prove it is not present. It just proves it was not in the sample that was tested. Therefore, we decided to treat my fish tank.

It is important to note that while *Giardia* can contaminate a fish tank, it is not a parasite that affects the fish directly. *Hexamita* has not been seen in mammals (though birds and reptiles can get it), but *Spironucleus* has been known to infect laboratory rodents and occasionally some primates, especially squirrel monkeys.

I immediately moved the fish tank out of Grr Grr's reach. I was so glad it was only three gallons. I eventually got a completely inside the tank filter, thereby making the top of the tank ferret-proof. The fish tank was treated with Flagyl, and Grr Grr started on what we hoped was the last round of medication. When it was finished, I eagerly waited for the stool specimen results. The big question to be answered was: Had the fish tank been the culprit, or was Grr Grr a chronic *Giardia* carrier?

Good news — the stool specimens were negative. No more Flagyl, no more disinfecting, and the best news to Grr Grr was no more isolation. She could be free to play all over the ferret-proofed house.

One place that was off limits was the hamster cage. As I have mentioned before, it is not uncommon for hamsters and other rodents to carry *Giardia*. Be sure not to let your other companion animals play in the rodent cages even if the rodents are not in them. Ferrets love to explore spaces, and will beg, even **demand** (as Grr Grr did) that you move out of the way and allow them to climb inside. You must be firm and say, "no."

Dogs, cats, and ferrets are natural predators of rodents. It is best to put your ferrets and other companion animals in a separate room when you are playing with your hamster, gerbil, etc. and when you are cleaning their cages. To protect yourself as well as others from *Giardia*, when changing the rodents' litter put the used litter in a bag then tie it shut. Be careful not to drop any of the litter or stools. If you do, then disinfect that area with the Clorox solution. Also disinfect their play tubes, houses, cages, the brushes that you cleaned with, and the sink. Always wash your hands after playing with your hamster or after cleaning its cage. Your veterinarian can also test and treat the animals for your peace of mind.

HOW COULD I DENY HER FAVORITE BEVERAGE — FISH TANK WATER?

Back to my story. Time passed and life went on as usual. Three more ferrets joined my household. A sprite named Sugar — a shelter ferret the same age as Grr Grr. Finley, a 9-month old hormone-raging hob (who was soon neutered) I bought from a private breeder. Last but not least, Cinnamon Firefly (Cinna), a three quarters German 8-week old jill I bought from another private breeder. She was spayed several months later for her safety. I also bought new fish for the aquarium. Any live food fed to the Betta came from pet stores, not from stagnant puddles in the yard.

Then, unknown to me, the fish tank began a slow leak. Like many ferrets, little Cinna finds trouble if trouble can be found. I noticed her eagerly licking the bottom shelf of the fish tank table. Finley had joined her. I quickly wiped up the water, disinfected the table, and stopped the leak. It was not long before Grr Grr again had diarrhea. I did not witness her drinking any of the fish tank water. Her stool test was barely positive for *Giardia*. Again, since all the ferrets share litter boxes and all use the cats' litter box, Dr. Chase treated everyone using Panacur

(fenbendazole; Hoechst India Ltd), a new medication with fewer side effects than Flagyl.

I remembered how hard it was on Grr Grr to be confined to her cage during the last infection. I did not want to put her through that again, so I decided to confine the ferrets to one room and daily disinfect the floor with the Lysol solution. That also meant disinfecting the two cage litter boxes and two more in the room. This was a lot of work, but I felt it was important to the ferrets' mental health. Since the cats had been cured of the first infection with only one treatment, I kept them separate from the ferrets. They enjoyed the vacation from being chased by ferrets.

After the round of Panacur, the cats' stool tested negative; Grr Grr's and Sugar's stools were barely positive; Finley's stool was a lot more contaminated, but Cinna's was the worst Dr. Chase had ever seen. She was astounded. This is when I told her about the fish tank leak, and Cinna drinking more water than Finley. She said it was possible that Finley or Cinna had been infected prior to my buying them. To partially, but not completely, rule this out, we decided to have their prior cage mates tested for *Giardia*. Both Finley's sisters' stools and Cinna's mother's stools were negative for *Giardia*. Again, this does not totally rule out prior infection, but the probability of the cage mates also being infected is very high if that had been the source. Unfortunately, the resident that tested fish tank water had moved, so we did not test the fish tank.

Dr. Chase decided because Cinna was still so infected (although never symptomatic) after one round of Panacur that the switch to Flagyl was necessary, even thought it can have side effects of "anorexia and vomiting with progression to generalized ataxia [lack of coordination]."[1] It also tastes *awfully* bitter.

So again, more disinfecting and confining the ferrets to one room. Escape attempts were frequent and occasionally successful. I had to upgrade the barrier several times. Shutting the door was not an option since it was summer and the air conditioner was located in that room. The Flagyl was harder than the Panacur to get into the ferrets. I scruffed them by the neck and *slowly* squirted the medicine into the side of their mouths. I followed this with another 1 cc syringe of water given *slowly*, then all were given a treat. The fish tank was also treated again with Flagyl — two sets of treatments 10 days apart.

There was also the question of what to do with the carpet under the fish tank table. Dr. Chase recommended that the carpet be steam cleaned. My carpet was old and I had been thinking of going back to just the hard wood floor, so I used this as an excuse to finally get rid of it. For the rest of you reading this article, you do not have to throw out your carpeting. If your carpet is contaminated with fish tank water or stool from an infected ferret or rodent, steam cleaning the carpet is satisfactory.

Treating the fish tank was not hard for me to do because I regularly do water exchanges as part of my aquarium's maintenance. Dr. Chase obtained the protocol for treating the aquarium from the Zoo/Marine/Wildlife Medical Residents at North Carolina State University. They said the treatment is risky to some fish, so you will want to weigh the risk against several factors: the probability of your ferrets, other companion animals, or even your children coming into contact with the fish tank water; how difficult the last infection was to clear up; how sick your ferrets became; or other medical conditions your ferrets have. The experts I consulted do not believe fish tanks to contain *Giardia* unless contaminated water has been added. Do not allow your hamsters to swim in your fish tank.

Dr. Chase gave me six packets each containing crushed Flagyl tablets equaling 60 mg per gallon of aquarium water. I was instructed to wear gloves while doing these treatments. I also wiped up any spills or splashes with disposable towels and disinfected the areas as described earlier in this article. After doing each treatment, I disinfected my supplies then rinsed them well. I also disinfected the sink. I disposed of the aquarium water into the toilet then disinfected it. Last, and most important, after each treatment or other times I came into contact with aquarium water I washed my hands well.

On Day One of treating my aquarium I poured Flagyl into the toe of a rolled down ladies' knee-hi stocking (she was not wearing it at the time), then tied the stocking shut. (Actually, I bought three pairs of a cheap brand.) I then cut off the charcoal filter of the aquarium, put the stocking into the aquarium, and kneaded the stocking between my fingers until all of the medication was released into the water. Then I did nothing for 24 hours. Unfortunately, I mean I did nothing more to the fish tank. With the ferrets I had plenty to keep me busy. If you dechlorinate your water using time instead of chemicals, now is the time to measure out enough water for the half-tank water exchange done on Day Two.

On Day Two, I siphoned out half of the water from the aquarium. **Do not** start the siphon with your mouth. I then added the fresh dechlorinated water to my aquarium. My fish tolerate quick water exchanges, but for some fish it must be done gradually removing and gradually replacing the water. I ran the charcoal filter for one hour, then turned it off. I added another dose of Flagyl using the same method as on Day One. I waited 24 more hours.

On Day Three, I turned on the charcoal filter and ran it for only one hour. Using the same method as before, I added the third dose of Flagyl. I waited another 24 hours.

On Day Four, I turned on the charcoal filter and left it running. The fish survived.

If you are not used to doing water exchanges, you may not find this treatment enjoyable. The other bad news is that you must repeat the four-day treatment again in 10 days from Day One.

After this round of Flagyl, the ferrets' stools were checked again. Grr Grr's and Sugar's were negative. Finley's and Cinna's were much improved, but still positive. At this point, I gave the ferrets separate out-of-the-cage times, so Grr Grr and Sugar would not become reinfected. I disinfected the floor after Cinna's and Finley's playtime was finished and before the other two came out of their cages.

Finally this round of Flagyl was over. Finley's and Cinna's stool specimens were negative. **Hurrah!** The total episode had lasted 35 days. I asked Dr. Chase, "Do I have to mop the floor today?" Her answer of "no" was music to my ears. Now my little friends could have run of the ferret-proofed house. They were free of their confinement, as well as having to take that awful-tasting medication.

The morals to this story are several. Do not feed your fish food caught from stagnant puddles, streams, or ponds. Even if you have not done this, Dr. Bruce Williams states: "Do not let your companion animals drink from fish tanks because there are other diseases they can catch."[2] Keep rabbits, hamsters, and other rodents separate from your other companion animals. Wash your hands well after handling hamsters or cleaning any cage or litter box. Have your companion animals' stools checked yearly, and sooner if diarrhea occurs.

I hope this article also solves the problem of "Why can't we clear up my ferret's *Giardia* infection?" for other people and their ferrets.

FOR VETERINARIANS

Test for Giardia

To determine if a ferret has *Giardia*, "tests should be done on fresh feces. Obtain a fresh prep or allow the ferret to remain at the clinic... and wait for the first fresh feces."[3] A fresh fecal smear can be examined, following addition of a drop of Lugol's iodine solution and addition of a coverslip. *Giardia* has a particular undulating swimming motion which makes it easily visualized. If *Giardia* trophozoites are not seen, a zinc sulfate floatation may help to visualize the trophozoites or cysts. "Slides prepared by the zinc sulfate flotation method should be examined within 10 minutes of preparation because the cysts shrink with time and lose the characteristic internal morphologic appearance that differentiates them from other organisms. Cysts are easiest to confuse with yeasts, which also stain with Lugol's iodine solution but are approximately half the size of *Giardia* cysts and do not contain internal structures."[4]

Treatment for Giardia

Treatment for ferrets infected with *Giardia* that is used by Dr. Chase: Albendazole 0.1 ml/lb twice a day for 2 days (works better than Panacur [fenbendazole]). Or Panacur 50 mg/kg once a day for 5 days, then off for 10 days, then on for another 5 days.

Or Flagyl (metronidazole) 10 mg/lb once or twice a day for 5 to 10 days depending on the severity of the infection. Mix Flagyl 250 mg/Pet-Tinic 10 cc. May use any water-soluble syrup. To mix, crush Flagyl 250 mg tablet in mortar with pestle. Add 1 to 2 cc of Pet-Tinic to mortar. Continue to crush with pestle until a very smooth paste is formed. Combine thoroughly with the rest of the Pet-Tinic. Pour into brown bottle. This method of mixing improves the suspension of the Flagyl in the Pet-Tinic. The client should still be instructed to shake well before administering.

Treatment of Fish Tanks for Fish Infected With Hexamita

Advise client that treatment is risky to some fish and that they will want to weigh the risk against several factors: the probability of their ferrets, other companion animals, or their children coming into contact with the fish tank water; how difficult the last infection was to clear up; how sick the ferret became; or other medical conditions the ferrets have. The experts I consulted do not believe fish tanks to contain *Giardia* unless contaminated water has been added. This treatment was obtained from Zoo/Marine/Wildlife Medical Residents at North

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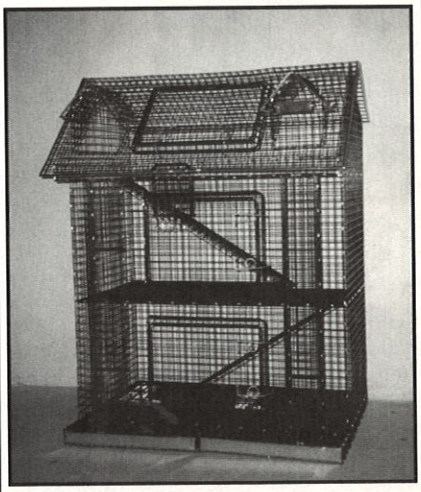

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Carolina State University. They were hopeful that this treatment would also be effective in killing *Giardia*.

Use Flagyl 60 mg/gallon of fish tank water. Crush tablets and place each dose in a separate packet. Instruct client to wear gloves while doing treatments, wipe up any spills or splashes with disposable towels, and disinfect area as previously described in this article. After doing each treatment, client should disinfect supplies used and rinse well. Last of all, wash hands well.

Day One: Instruct client to pour Flagyl into ladies' knee-hi stocking. Tie stocking shut. Cut off fish tank charcoal filter. Put stocking into fish tank. Knead stocking between fingers until all the medication is released into the water. Prepare the amount of water for half-talk water exchange ready for the next day, if the client uses time instead of chemicals to dechlorinate. Wait for 24 hours.

Day Two: Gradually siphon out (do not start siphon with mouth) water from fish tank until one-half of the water is removed. Gradually add fresh dechlorinated exchange water. Run charcoal filter for one hour, then turn off. Add another dose of Flagyl using the same method as on Day One. Wait for 24 hours.

Day Three: After 24 hours, turn charcoal filter on and run for one hour then turn off again. Add third dose of Flagyl using the same method as on Day One. Wait for another 24 hours.

Day Four: After 24 hours, turn charcoal filter on. The first set of treatments is now complete. Repeat the four-day treatment again in 10 days from Day One.

FOOTNOTES

1. Barr, BVSc, MVS, PhD, Stephen C., and Dwight D. Bowman, MS, PhD, "Giardiasis in Dogs and Cats." Compendium of Continuing Education for Practicing Veterinarians. Vol. 16, No. 5 (May 1994); p. 606.

2. Williams, DVM, Bruce. Telephone conversation with author. January 14, 1997.

3. Barr & Bowman. p. 605.

4. Personal e-mail letter from Bruce Williams, DVM, to Pamela T. Grant. July 12, 1996.

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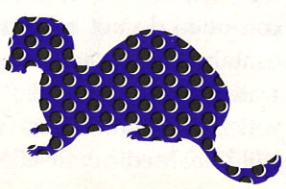
Stephen C. Barr, BVSc, MVS, PhD and Dwight D. Bowman, MS, PhD, "Giardiasis in Dogs and Cats." Compendium of Continuing Education for Practicing Veterinarians. Vol. 16, No. 5 (May 1994); pp. 603–610.

Bruce Williams, DVM. Telephone conversations with author. January 10 and 14, 1997.

Joyce A. Bartlett is a ferret owner and a Registered Nurse from Greensboro, North Carolina.

Ms. Bartlett is not a veterinarian, and readers should consult their own veterinarians if their ferrets are ill. Veterinarians are urged to consult current prescribing information for all drugs and devices mentioned in the text of this article.



Pick Sabrina's Nose Contest

To celebrate how happy we are that Sabrina went through her surgery OK and is now back to her fuzzy self (see page 24), we're holding a Pick Sabrina's Nose Contest. Just (carefully) go through this issue looking for appearances of Sabrina's nose (if you can't see the nose, it doesn't count!). Write down the total number of Sabrina's Noses, and list the page number and location of each of them (we don't want you just guessing numbers). Make sure you put your name & address on your entry. We'll put all the correct answers into a big box & draw five winners. The deadline for entries to be received is July 31, 1997. Please MAIL your entries to be received before then (no e-mail, FAX, phone entries). The winners will receive their very own "I told you they grow in cans!" poster (as seen on page 21), which features Sabrina and Bandette. Please don't send orders with your contest entry — it might confuse us. Send your entries to:

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BERRET FINDS A HOME

a story by Dick Bossart

Berret was a confused little ferret. Of course, being only eight weeks old, and still in a pet store, he didn't even have a name yet. But he did know that he was confused and not entirely happy.

He could vaguely remember the days before his eyes were even open. He could remember the soft little cries made by his brothers and sisters; feeling their warm bodies wriggling next to his. His favorite memory was the sweet, warm taste of his mother's milk.

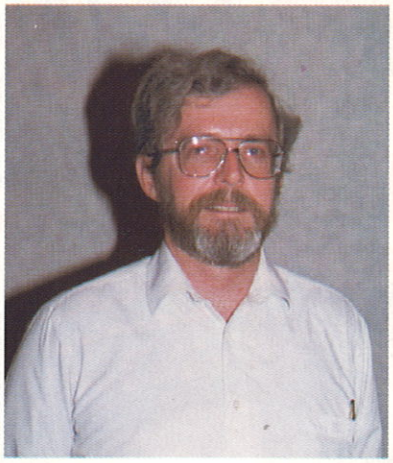
He could remember his first sights of his litter mates, covered with soft grey fur; and how big and beautiful his mother looked to him. He could remember humans visiting him every day to clean their cage and to hold and talk to them all. Even though he couldn't understand what they were saying, they sounded very nice and he liked them all.

But one day the human who came to visit him didn't just talk to him and hold him. The human put him and his litter mates in a large box with other little ferrets that he had never seen before. In fact, up until then he didn't even know that there were any other ferrets in the whole world. It was such a surprise that he didn't even think about being afraid. He thought that the entire thing was the beginning of a great adventure, and he was very excited.

The excitement soon gave way to boredom as Berret was moved from box to box, with never a time to explore. Every time he tried to play with his new-found ferret friend, he'd either be moved to a different box, or else the box would bump around so much that they could hardly stand up, let alone play.

Finally the bumping and bouncing stopped,

The Real Berret



Dick Bossart operates The 4 Li'l Paws Ferret Shelter in Merrimack, New Hampshire. He has written several stories about Berret, who was a beloved ferret. He has also written a book about ferret care, *The Ferret Owner's Manual*, which is available in the general information library in America Online's Small Mammals & Exotic Pets area, as well as in printed form from the author. For more information, write to:
Richard Bossart, 1 Blair Rd, Merrimack, NH 03054.

"Berret Finds a Home," is © Richard Bossart. Reprinted with permission.

and Berret found himself taken out of his last box and put in a large cage with the other ferrets that had been in the box with him. It didn't take him long to find a soft pile of cloth inside of a box where he could sleep; or to locate the food and water. All of the other little ferrets were thirsty and hungry too. After they ate and drank they were so sleepy that they all crawled into the cloth and fell asleep in one great big pile.

The next morning Berret awoke to strange sounds. For a moment he didn't know where he was and he looked around for his mother for protection; but there was only his new ferret friends. All of them seemed as frightened as he was.

Soon the fear gave way to curiosity, which soon overcame the fear. He began to notice the sounds of other animals: the squawking of birds, the barking of dogs, and even the soft mewing of kittens (although, of course he didn't know then that this was what he was hearing). What soon interested him the most was all of the humans that began walking around his cage and peering in at him.

Every now and then, one particular human would reach into the cage and take out one of Berret's friends and hand them to one of the other humans. Usually the second human would hold the young ferret a while, then hand it back to the first human who then put it back into the cage. That even happened to Berret once. It was exciting at first, but soon became boring. The humans never wanted to play.

The cage became boring. His new friends became boring. Even ferret play became boring. This was not much of an adventure after all, and if the truth were known, Berret missed his mother more than just a little bit.

"What's going on here? What's going to happen to me? Is this all there is?" he asked himself more than once during those long first-days in the pet store.

Meanwhile, across town, Melony was just finishing up her talk with her mother and father at their weekly family meeting.

". . . and since I'm now 11, I think I'm old enough to have a pet. I know that I'll have to take care of it and it will be my responsibility. I'm ready to do that and I'll help buy it out of my allowance," she said, then sat down to await her parents' decision, her fingers tightly crossed for luck behind her back. She had rehearsed and rehearsed her speech until she felt it was just right.

The smile her father showed briefly, then hid, brightened her spirits. She knew that look and it usually meant that he would agree with her, but it also meant that there would be a catch to his agreement.

"Melony, your mother and I thought that you might have something like this in mind and we talked it over last night. I'm glad you realize that owning a pet is a big responsibility. You would be responsible for the life of another living thing. It will depend on you for its total care. It will look to you for its food, water, grooming and even as its best friend."

He had that look now that Melony knew meant he was serious.

"Before we can agree that you may have a pet, you'll have to show us that you know how to care for it. You'll have to decide on what kind of pet you want, and show us that you know enough about that kind of pet so you can properly care for it. That means that you will have to know what kind of pet the animal will make: what kind of food; what type of special care; what kind of vaccinations; what kind of illness it might get; and what kind of training it will need. In other words, you have to show us that you know enough not only to make the decision as to what kind of pet you should get, but also what kind of care you have to give it."

Her mother added, "We want you to realize that having a pet of any kind is a long-term commitment. Puppies grow up to be dogs, and kittens grow up to be cats. Both may live for well over 10 or 15 years. You're 11 now and if you get a dog or cat, you may still be responsible for its care when you're 26 years old."

Melony knew they were right. Still, they did agree that she could have a pet. She only had to show that she knew how to care for it.

Melony quickly agreed, and both her mother and father offered to help her if she needed it. At her mother's suggestion, Melony began writing a list of possible pets; one type of animal listed at the top of the page. Taking out her blue spiral notebook that she had left over from one of her school classes, she wrote, "Cat" on one page, "Dog" on the next. After that she had to think, but continued with "Hamster," "Gerbil," "Bird," "Fish," then even included "Horse."

"Well, you never know until you ask," she thought as she imagined herself riding proudly down the

street with all of her friends looking at her. Then she crossed it off as she pictured such a large animal in her small yard. She even laughed as she imagined keeping a horse in her bedroom. Melony crossed off "fish" from her list too. Although they would fit in her room, she thought that playing with a fish wouldn't be much fun.

Under each remaining animal, Melony wrote out the questions that she needed to answer.

1. What does it eat; how much, and how often?
2. How big does it get?
3. How long does it live?
4. Does it need any special care?
5. Does it need vaccinations? If so, what kind and how often?
6. Does it make a good pet, and can I play with it?

Melony showed her list to her father, who always being "practical" as he called it, added the question,

7. How much does it cost to buy, and how much does it cost a year to keep well fed and healthy?

She thought that was a good question since she would have to pay part of that cost out of her allowance.

Now Melony was stumped. Where would she get answers to all of these questions? She knew she could answer some of the questions already. "After all, dogs eat dog food, and cats eat cat food, don't they?" The rest of the answers would take a little more time and some help too, but she was sure that she could have them all answered by tomorrow or the next day at the latest.

She was wondering just where to start when her father suggested that they visit the big pet store in the local shopping mall.

"It will give you a chance to see and hold some of the pets, and to ask the salespeople questions."

Melony certainly didn't have to be asked twice. She had her favorite red jacket on and was in the car almost before her father turned around.

It's strange how sometimes your life can completely change by some seemingly small happening. Sometimes just looking up can change the course of your entire life. The little kit that would later be known as Berret was rough-housing with one of his favorite playmates. Berret was flattened on the bottom of their cage, not moving a muscle. He was sure his friend couldn't see him, and was all set to rush and pounce, when a movement across the store caught his eye.

If Berret had been asleep like most of his friends; if he had just been facing the other direction; if the parrot on a perch behind the ferret cage hadn't picked just that moment to squawk; if the squawk hadn't caused Melony to look in that direction just as Berret looked in hers, Melony and Berret might have never met. But all of that did happen. Berret saw Melony. Melony saw Berret. For a moment neither one of them saw anything else.

Melony hardly noticed when she bumped into the table of rawhide dog-chews beside the aisle way. She just turned and walked toward the ferret cages, her eyes never leaving Berret. Berret walked over to the side of the cage and put his feet up on its wire sides, his eyes never leaving Melony. Melony just stood there until she heard her father's voice.

"What do we have here? Ferrets?" he asked to no one in particular as he began to read the small sign on the side of the cage. "I don't know anything about them. First one I've really seen up close."

"May I help you? Would you like to hold one?" Both Melony and her father jumped a little. Neither had seen the saleswoman approaching.

"Yes, please. May I hold that one?" said Melony pointing at the small, grey and white kit now clinging to the cage wire and nodding his head as if to get their attention.

The saleswoman unlatched the cage door, carefully reached in, lifted Berret out of the cage, and just as carefully placed Berret in Melony's arms.

To Melony it seemed like a light went on somewhere inside her, it was hard to describe. The bundle of fur in her hands was hardly big enough to fill it, but it felt warm and felt . . . well, wonderful.

To Berret it felt almost like being back with his mother and brothers and sisters — only somehow better. Melony raised him to her cheek and rubbed his soft warm fur against it. Berret sniffed and began to lick her cheek with his tiny tongue. She smelled and even tasted wonderful. His nose found her ear. He stuck it inside and began to lick. That tickled Melony and she scrinched up her shoulders and "eeeked" laughingly.

"Do they bite?" asked her father somewhat concerned. To which the saleswoman chuckled, "Oh, only if you insist. Actually they're

a lot like a little kitten or puppy. They sometimes nip, but they don't mean to hurt you. It's their way of asking you to play with them. That's how a lot of young animals play. The problem is that their skin is a lot tougher than human skin, so sometimes what's a gentle nip to a young animal is a little painful to a human. Ferrets are very intelligent, though and learn very quickly. I wish my 18-month-old son would learn not to bite as fast as a ferret learns."

"How big do they get?"

"It varies a lot from ferret to ferret. These have all been altered by the breeder before they're sent to us, so they'll tend to be smaller than those that mature before they're altered. The males may get to be 21 to 24 inches long and weigh 3 to 5 pounds; while the females generally are smaller and may only weigh 1 to 3 pounds when fully grown. They grow until they're about 8 months old. These are only about 8 weeks. The one she's holding is a little male."

"What do they eat?" continued Melony's father, completely forgetting that it was Melony's responsibility to ask those questions. His own curiosity was aroused.

"They eat a dry kitten food. I understand that it has to have a lot of animal protein in it so that most grocery store brands aren't suitable. I'm afraid I don't know too much about ferrets though. Paul, who usually works here, is the ferret expert. He has three of his own, but he's on vacation until next week. It was Paul who talked the owner into carrying ferrets. We just started selling them about three weeks ago, so no one else here knows too much about them. I learned everything I know from Paul."

By now Berret was nestled comfortably in the crook of Melony's arm; eyes half closed in contentment while she softly scratched him behind his ears. Berret lifted his head and gave a huge yawn.

Melony looked down at the sleepy Berret, then up at her father, "Dad, do you think I could. . . ?"

But her father shook his head. "Melony, you remember our agreement. You know nothing about ferrets. I don't know anything about ferrets. It would be cruel to take an animal home when we know next to nothing about them. Why don't we look at some of the other animals, then see which one you really want?"

Melony sighed as she slowly handed the now sleeping ferret to the saleswoman. "No, I've already made up my mind. She turned to the saleswoman who was putting Berret back into the cage, "Please don't sell him. I'll be back for him as soon as I can."

"I'd like to hold him for you, but I just can't. We have lots of ferrets though, and we'll be getting more," she said.

Melony knew that she didn't want just a ferret, she wanted that particular one, just as badly as she was sure that he wanted her.

Berret woke up just as the cage door was opened. He knew that the hands holding him were not the little girl's. "Where did she go? Why did she leave me? Did I do something wrong?" He felt like he had lost his family all over again. Although his friends were busily eating and playing, Berret walked slowly over to his sleeping box and crawled inside.

Melony was disappointed. She had always thought that the encyclopedia had information about everything you'd ever want to know. Now she wanted to know about ferrets, but there was very little to be found. They found a little bit written about the Black Footed Ferret, but that animal turned out to be a wild, endangered species. That was about as useful as finding a book on a coyote when you were looking for a book on dogs.

It had a couple of paragraphs on the Domestic Ferret. They found that the ferret was believed to have been first domesticated by the Egyptians about 2000 – 3000 years ago to help keep rats and mice out of their grain storage buildings. It went on to say that they were related to the mink, ermine, weasel and European Polecat; and distantly related to the skunk, marten and badger. They both laughed when they read that the name "ferret" meant "little furry thief" in Latin. It appeared that the ferret was still used in some places in the world to hunt rabbits. The hunters put nets over the rabbit holes and send muzzled ferrets into the holes to chase the rabbits into the nets. The rabbit hunters in the United States got so upset with this that they had

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hunting with ferrets made illegal in many states. This was done by making ownership of ferrets illegal. Surprisingly there were still a few states like California and Hawaii where you still weren't allowed to own a ferret, for some strange reason. All in all though, they found little of the information that Melony needed.

Melony was just finishing the article when her mother walked in. "How did your visit to the pet store go? Did you find anything?"

Melony's father answered, "Well, it seems that our daughter has decided that maybe she wants a ferret."

Her mother's eyebrows rose at least an inch, "A what?"

"Well Melony fell in love with a little ferret kit they had in the store, and she didn't want to look at anything else. The ferret seemed to like her too. It was cute."

"But, aren't they wild animals? What do we know about ferrets?"

Melony answered without taking her eyes off of the encyclopedia, "No, they're domestic animals. They don't exist in the wild. The encyclopedia says that they've been domesticated about 500 years longer than the cat. And you should see him. He's sort of grey and white, with white feet and a white strip down the middle of his head, and his eyes look sort of black except when the light shines in them and then they glow bright red, and. . ." at that point Melony ran out of steam as she saw her mother shake her head and her father shrug as an answer.

Melony's mood switched back to reality. "Do you think the public library would have anything?" she began to ask then realized that it was already too late in the day for the library to be open. To make it worse, tomorrow was a Sunday and the library wasn't even open. The best she could possibly do would be to go there after school on Monday.

The rest of the weekend went by very slowly. She felt sad when she thought that the little kit might soon be bought by someone else. She felt hopeful that since it was late in the weekend, maybe, just maybe no one else had seen the kit and bought him. She felt angry, because she knew what she had to do, and there was just no way of getting it done. Melony sighed a lot that weekend, and was not in the best of moods (although she did try hard not to show it).

If the rest of that weekend seemed to go slowly, Monday at school crawled at a snail's pace. She must have looked at her watch a thousand times during the day, and checked to make sure it was still running at least a hundred. Finally the last bell of the day rang and she raced out the school door and to the library.

The librarian was very helpful and showed Melony how to use the card catalog to find the topics she might be interested in. Unfortunately there was nothing listed under "Ferrets" except "endangered species" and she knew that must be about the Black Footed Ferret. Melony even went and asked the librarian to help her some more, but not even the librarian could find anything useful.

Melony's mother came to pick her up at 5 o'clock just as they had agreed.

"Did you find what you were looking for?" she asked brightly.

Her mother could really see the answer written in disappointment all over her daughter's face. "No and I've looked everywhere. I just don't know where else to look."

"Well, maybe you could just get a regular pet like a puppy or kitten."

Melony didn't even reply.

Her father was already home when she and her mother got home.

"Melony, you look like you lost your best friend," he said, which was exactly the wrong thing to say, because that's exactly how Melony felt. Tears welled up in her eyes.

"Melony, this is about that ferret isn't it? You couldn't find any information in the library?"

Melony just shook her head.

"Look, I may have an idea. I think that some of the computer bulletin boards that I use have sections on pets and animals. I use the computer now to talk to people all over the world about my train hobby. Why don't we take a look and see if there is anything on ferrets?"

Melony was familiar with their home computer. Sometimes she used it to do her homework when she had a book report to write out. She even used it to play computer games. Once she even wrote notes to a pen pal all the way across the country. Right now though, she wasn't very hopeful that she would ever get answers to her questions.

It only took her father a few minutes on their computer to find the section on pets. They were both surprised at the fact that there was a very active "Ferrets" group. He "told" the computer to send all of the messages posted on the "Ferret" section that were posted during the past two months. The

big surprise was that there were so many messages posted during that time that it took the computer nearly 10 more minutes to send it all. After that, it was just a matter of reading it to see what they could find.

Melony found the notes fun to read. The people wrote about their ferrets and some of the funny things that they did. There were lots of questions being asked, and more important, as far as Melony was concerned, a lot of answers.

"Dad, what's an 'F,' 'A,' 'Q'?"

"Oh, that stands for Frequently Asked Questions. It's an abbreviation some people use to keep from typing out the whole series of words. Why?"

"Well, some of the notes tell people to download the FAQs in the Ferret Library."

"OK. I've seen that in my Train Section too. It's a place where people put answers to questions that get asked over and over. They can refer people there instead of typing out the same answers all of the time. I guess we'd better get on the bulletin board again and download those FAQs. While we're at it we might as well print them too so we can all read them, and we can refer to them any time we need to."

A half an hour later, Melony, her father and mother were all sitting reading the questions and answers on ferrets.

"Look here," Melony said, "ferrets eat a high-quality kitten food. You leave it in a bowl and they can eat as much as they want. You have to make sure they always have clean water too. They say a rabbit or hamster bottle works best."

"Uh huh, and they live between 8 and 10 years," read her father.

"I didn't know this," said her mother. "They can be trained to use a litter box, just like a cat. You do have to trim their nails and clean their ears every other week. You bathe them just a few times a year. Otherwise you dry their coat and they scratch a lot. And here it says they need distemper and a rabies shots once a year."

"Look at this Mom, Dad. They play like kittens all of their lives. They're gentle; love people; like to travel with their owners; can be trained to do tricks and to ride on your shoulder. And they're like pack rats. They take little things and hide them. That sounds cute."

"Hummm," her father nodded as he continued to read, "You have to 'ferret-proof' your house. That means check for holes in floors and walls, under cabinets and things like washers, dryers and dishwashers. Seems that they are so curious that they might get into something and seriously injure themselves. It also warns of recliners and sofa beds. Suggests that you wire the mechanism so that no one can use it and possibly kill your ferret sleeping in the mechanism. Well, we wouldn't have to worry about that here since we don't have either one."

Mother started laughing. "Ferrets sound like little clowns. Some of these stories people tell in here are really funny. I get the impression that these people really love their ferrets. Or else have a fantastic sense of humor."

They all began exchanging sheets of paper with stories by ferret owners. They couldn't help smiling or laughing at each of the antics.

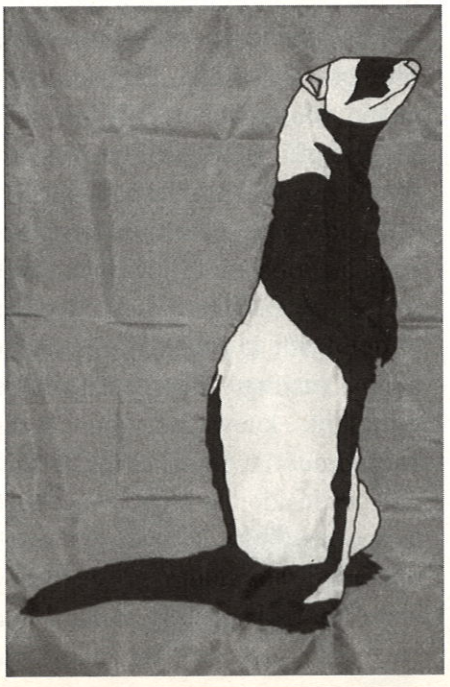
"I think maybe you have to love ferrets and have a good sense of humor too," chimed in her father. Then they began laughing again.

"Oh Dad, can I get one? That little grey and white one I held at the pet store? I've answers to all of the questions, and I will take good care of him. Honest."

Melony's father looked at her mother. "Well, we did promise. . ."

"I guess you and Melony better start ferret-proofing then."

Melony squealed with delight



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and started bouncing up and down, her hair swinging from side to side. "When can we go? Can we go right now, Dad?"

"Hey, wait a minute," he laughed. "The stores all closed a half-hour ago. Tell you what though. If I get out of my meeting on time tomorrow, we'll go right after I get home from work. That should get us there before they close."

It was a boring day at the pet store, even for a young healthy ferret. Berret was really not expecting to ever see the little girl again. After all it had been several days since she had held him, and he had licked her ears making her squeal with laughter. He spent most of his time moping around the cage, not really playing, but no longer just sleeping in the sleep-box either. All of his friends had gone to their new homes except one; a little black and tan male.

It was late morning when a man came in to look in the cage. Berret looked up at him but otherwise just lay there, while his friend bounced and jumped and ran up to the man to play.

"This is a really peppy one," he said to the saleswoman, while tickling the little kit's tummy. The kit responded with a happy little hissing sound then jumped up and bounced around the cage, with his back arched and his head going back and forth in a happy-ferret-dance.

"I've been wanting to get another ferret for some time now, and I guess this is as good a time as any. I've had my eye on this one since you got them in last week. He sure is a feisty one." He picked up the bouncing kit and handed it to the saleswoman. "Looks like you're running low on ferrets."

"Yes, this shipment went fast. We only have the one left. We won't be getting in any more until next week. I've sure enjoyed them. I think they only have two speeds: fast and sleep." They both chuckled as they walked away.

Berret sighed. Now he was all alone.

It was lunch time and Melony was so excited she could hardly eat. She was hoping, hoping, hoping that the little ferret would still be there. She sighed for what must have been the hundredth time that morning. "But what if he wasn't there any more?" and she sighed again.

Afternoon classes crawled with the speed of a snail; a very slow snail at that. Two whole hours to go, then another hour until her father came home. "Sigh."

Berret hadn't even seen the woman enter the store. He was curled up fast asleep in his sleep-box. The first inkling that something unusual was going on was when a warm hand pulled him out of the box and lifted him out of the cage. He was still somewhat groggy from sleep. "What in the world was going on? Where was he going?" All he knew for sure was that it was not the little girl.

Berret was placed in a plastic carrying cage with a bright shiny metal door. The door latched closed with a dull "thunk" and a slight ringing sound. The next thing he knew he was being carried out the door.

From inside the cage it was hard to see anything. There were small openings in the sides, but they were too high for him to look out. He could look out the door, but only caught glimpses of: first the outside; then the inside of the woman's car. It looked like Berret was going to a home. He thought that he should feel happy, but he didn't. In fact, if he thought about it, he felt very sad.

The final bell finally rang. Melony already had her books on her desk ready to go. The other children in the halls seemed to be in no hurry at all. "If they'd just get out of my way!" she thought through clenched teeth. "Can't they see I'm in a hurry?"

Then the front door of the school was behind her and she was rushing down the stairs.

"Melony. Melony." The sound of her father's voice finally penetrated her thoughts.

"Dad, what are you doing here?"

"Well my meeting got out early and I had really planned nothing else for the rest of the day, so I decided to take an hour off and meet you here. Gives us more time to get to the pet store."

Melony felt like she was going to explode from happiness; that her feet weren't even touching the ground.

Her father chuckled, "You better close your mouth or you may catch some flies with it. Do you want to go?"

But before he was even done asking, Melony was skipping down the remaining steps, shouting back over her shoulder, "Hurry up, Dad. Where is the car? Come on!"

The trip passed surprisingly quickly. She and her father (mostly Melony) talked the entire way about ferrets and what they were going to do and how they would carry it home, and how they would limit its explorations to a room at a

time, and a hundred other things that seemed so important. They were lucky enough to find a parking spot not too far from the pet store. Melony at first held back to walk with her father, but rapidly got further and further ahead. The pet store door was already closing behind her by the time her father got there. Without hesitation she rushed to the ferret cages, while her father headed for the saleswoman.

They both got the disappointing news at about the same time: Melony when she finally admitted to herself that the cage was empty; her father when the saleswoman told him that they had sold the last ferret just about an hour earlier.

Melony did try not to cry. She really tried very hard, but the disappointment was just too much to hold in, and little tears formed on the corners of her eyes and wandered down her cheeks.

Her father could only say, "Melony, I'm really sorry. They will be getting in another shipment next week, and they promised to call as soon as they get in. You should be able to get the first choice."

Melony could only nod and try to smile, "It's all right, Dad. I knew that he might have been sold, it's just that I kept hoping that. . ." and a few more tears rolled down her cheeks.

No one spoke on the way home. No one spoke as they walked up the sidewalk and through the front door. Melony's mother met them in the entryway. One look at Melony and she didn't even have to ask why her father was home early, or what was troubling her daughter. She looked concerned as she said to him, "I tried to call you at work, and left a message on your answering machine. I wanted to tell you . . . "

At just that moment, they all heard the skittering of tiny feet as a small, grey and white ferret with a white stripe on its head came to a quick stop right behind them.

Melony looked down at Berret. Berret looked up at Melony. Neither quite believed what they were seeing so they just stared at one another.

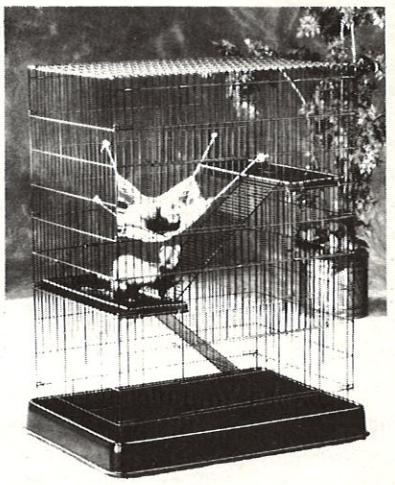
". . . that I had some spare time this afternoon and I was afraid that they might sell the ferret before we could get down to the store after school. So I went down and bought him. We've been having a great time!"

Melony bent down. Berret slowly walked up to Melony. He couldn't believe it. It was the little girl from the store! He hardly noticed when she picked him up and held him to her face. She smelled so wonderful. He closed his eyes and sighed in contentment. Then it hit him. If he was at his new home and the little girl was here, this must be her home too!

Berret was so excited that he couldn't stay still. As soon as Melony put him down, he began hopping and skipping around the floor; his mouth wide open; his back arched; small hissing laughter coming from his throat. Berret danced the Ferret Dance of Joy, while his new family laughed the human sounds of happiness.

THE END

Ferret Playpen



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Ferret Events Calendar

This listing is updated as new/more complete information is received.

May

10 — Ferret Services of Freedom, Second Annual Ferret Fun Day (10am–4pm). Location: North Conway Community Center, North Conway, NH. For information: 603-539-5631 Stephanie Mudgett.

10 — Susquehanna Valley Ferret Club, "Ferret Frolic '97"; sanctioned by the League of Independent Ferret Enthusiasts (LIFE). Location: Holiday Inn and Conference Center, New Cumberland, PA. For information: 717-939-0625.

16–18 — Fourth Annual Rare Breed Livestock, Miniature, and Small Pet Expo. Location: Fairgrounds, Knoxville, TN. For information: ddtarr@usit.net or 423-475-3777.

16–18 — Minnesota Ferret Association (MFA) Championship Show. Location: St. Paul Civic Center, St. Paul, MN. For information: MFA PO Box 243, Wyoming MN 55092 or 612-462-5597.

31–June 1 — Vicki Clark's Exotics & Family Pet Showcase Exposition. Location: Agriculture Hall at Allentown Fairgrounds, Allentown, PA. For information: 215-721-7199.

June

7 — Great Lakes Ferret Association championship show, "Ferret Quest '97." Location: Wayne Ford Civic League on Wayne Rd., Westland, MI. For information: 313-287-4572 or e-mail ferretfas@aol.com (Debbie Miller) or 517-328-3903 or e-mail weasils@iserv.net (Tracy Tunnison, Registrar).

21 — Second Annual Friends & Ferrets Walk for Ferret Wise Shelter, walk-a-thon to raise funds for Ferret Wise Rescue & Rehabilitation Shelter. Location: Keene, NH. For information: Ferret Wise, PO Box 561, Marlborough, NH 03455 or 603-876-4975.

29 — Pennsylvania Ferret Association fun match, "Ferret Follies Fun Match" (12pm - 5pm). Location: North Park, Pittsburgh, PA. For information: 412-861-8482 or 412-643-9494 or e-mail ferret@usaor.net

August

9–10 — Vicki Clark's Exotics & Family Pet Showcase Exposition. Location: NJ Convention & Expo Center at Raritan Center, Edison, NJ. For information: 215-721-7199.

10 — Oregon Ferret Association (OFA) fun match. Location: Clackamas River Park, Oregon City, OR. For information: 503-557-8369 (Christine Mathis) or OFA, PO Box 90682, Portland, OR 97290.

22–24 — Ninth Small Mammal Veterinary Conference; sponsored by the American Ferret Association (AFA). Location: BWI Marriott, Baltimore, MD. For information: 1-888-FERRET-1.

September

6 — Pennsylvania Ferret Association, "Three Rivers Ferret Festival"; sanctioned by the American Ferret Association (AFA). Location: New Stanton Fire Hall, New Stanton, PA. For information: 412-861-8482 or 412-643-9494 or e-mail ferret@usaor.net

20 — Baltimore Ferret Club show. Location: Annapolis, MD. For information: 410-448-1281.

October

4 — Legion of Superferrets (LOS) National championship show, "Ferret Fiasco '97"; sanctioned by the League of Independent Ferret Enthusiasts (LIFE). Location: Croydon, PA. For information: 215-781-9044.

November

1–2 — Vicki Clark's Exotics & Family Pet Showcase Exposition. Location: Memorial Hall at York Fairgrounds, York, PA. For information: 215-721-7199.

29–30 — Vicki Clark's Exotics & Family Pet Showcase Exposition. Location: Fort Washington Expo Center, Fort Washington, PA. For information: 215-721-7199.

If your club is having a show or fun match, you must get the information to *Modern Ferret* as far in advance as possible. We can no longer list shows for which we have not received information. When submitting information for a show listing, please include the following:

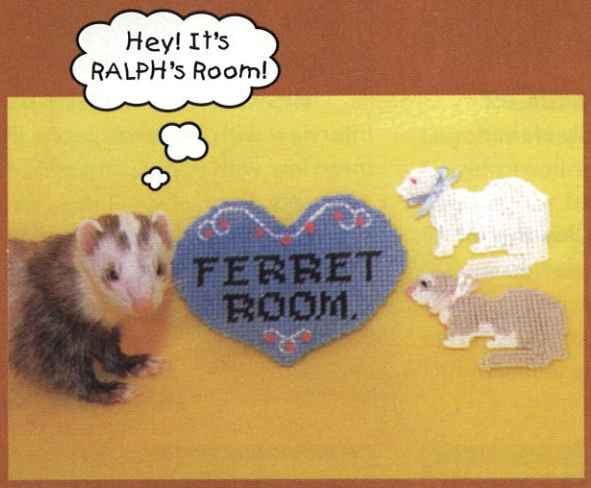
1. Date. 2. Club/show sponsor (e.g., Anytown Ferret Club). 3. Show title, if any (e.g., "Ferret Show #1"). 4. Sanctioning body, if any (e.g., LIFE, NAFA, AFA, FURO). 5. Place of show (city, state, hall if known). 6. Contact (can be any or all: phone/fax/address/e-mail). These listings are FREE, so send in your information!

Remember — ferret shows are a great opportunity to meet experienced ferret owners and ask questions!

Note: Modern Ferret attempts to attend every show we can that is on the East Coast. Due to time spent on TV appearances and other publicity, we will be cutting back in 1997. We will make every effort to attend the shows that are listed in bold (barring unforeseen health problems, bad weather, etc.). We will attend other shows provided we have time.

Ralph's Reviews IN COLOR

featuring: RALPH THE INSPECTOR



Ferret Wall Hangings and Magnets by Vickey Bishop
Send Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope to:
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ATTN: Jack
1903 Lodestone Dr.
Leadville, CO 80461

Show your guests your love of ferrets with hand-made wall hangings and magnets. Ferret-shaped wall hanging and magnet are available in various ferret colors — albino, silver-mitt, black-eyed white, and others. "Ferret Room" wall hanging comes in a variety of colors, too. Use the magnets to put up important reminders (like, "buy treats" or "vet appointment on Monday") on your refrigerator or file cabinet. A percentage of the profits goes to the Ferrets Etc. shelter in Denver, Colorado, so you can help homeless ferrets and decorate your home at the same time. Don't forget to say "Hello" to Jack — he's a blaze just like Ralph.

Ralph's Review: "I wouldn't put these on a refrigerator or on a wall! I would put them in my secret spot behind the TV cart with my toys and all the rest of the stuff I like."

Ferret Checks
Kansas Bank Note Company
PO Box 360
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If you're tired of the same old check designs and want something that reflects your love of ferrets, now you can get ferret checks from the Kansas Bank Note Company (KBNC). Paying bills is almost fun with five different check designs — four have single ferrets, each in a different pose, and one has all four poses. Various borders and type styles are available. KBNC checks meet current U.S. banking requirements. Use them to buy ferret treats or supplies — or another special fuzzy. Call or mail for a catalog or samples.

Ralph's Review: "Humans seem to get very attached to pieces of paper. You should have seen how mad Mom got when I tried to steal a booklet of these 'check' things. Heck, they're only paper!"

You saw it here in Modern Ferret!

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HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE #1

Ferrets Legal in Michigan
Interview with David Guthartz
A Trip to the Photographer
Interview with Martin Glinsky of Eight in One Pet Products
Green Slime Alert

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HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE #2

Ferret Breeding with Sally Heber
Ferret Food
Nail Clipping
Interview with Deborah Jeans (Part 1)
Gastric Ulcers
Blood Collection

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HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE #3

Interview with Deborah Jeans (Part 2)
Interview with Pam Grant of STAR* Ferrets
The Aging Ferret
Cage Building with Peter Koch
Lymphosarcoma Symptoms & Treatment

HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE #6

Finding a Lost Ferret
Come on Command
Showing Your Ferret
Funniest Food Stories
Ear Cleaning
Ferret-proofing Couches
Adrenal-Associated Endocrinopathy

HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE #7

Ferret Video Roundup
Our New Cage
Living with Insulinoma
Ferrets & Cats
Brushing Teeth
Kix from a Machine
Toxicological Problems
Ferreting in the UK

FERRETS IN CALIFORNIA: A SPECIAL REPORT
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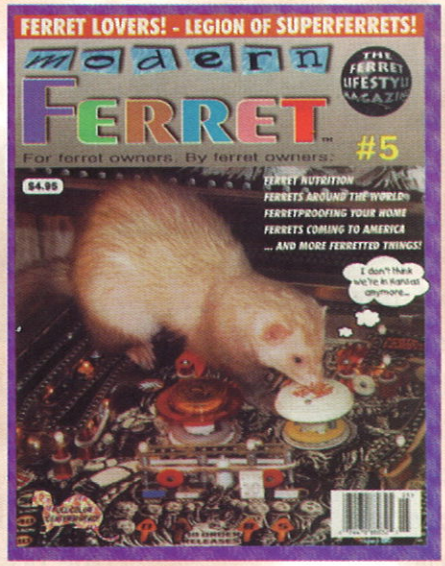
FREE FERRET POSTCARDS INSIDE!
Do ya think he'll teach us how to bark?
KITS WILL BE KITS ...

HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE #8

Holiday Dangers
The California Saga
Going to California
Ferrets and Dogs
Ferret Walk-a-Thon
Adrenal Surgery and Recovery
Cystic Kidneys
Scaling Teeth
Starting a Shelter

HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE #4

Interview with Beach Party Productions
Interview with Pat Wright
Interview with Dr. Tom and Trish Willard of Totally Ferret
Bringing Ferrets Together
Ferret Accidents
Ferret Entrepreneurs
Heartworm in Ferrets



HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE #5

Legal in Massachusetts
Ferret-proofing
Begging for Treats
Interview with the Legion of Superferrets
Bringing Ferrets from England
Ferret Nutrition
Hemolytic Anemia in Ferrets

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Microchipping in Ferret Shelters
Playing Dead
Ferrets on the Internet
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A Ferretted Fairy-Tail™

The Princess and the Treat

story by Eric and Mary R. Shefferman
art by Mary R. Shefferman

Once upon a time there was a handsome ferret prince. One day, he decided it was time to get married. But he would not be satisfied with just any old (or young) jill. No, indeed. He wanted the jill he married to have a certain special something. He wanted her to be a princess.

Word was spread throughout the kingdom that the ferret prince was looking for a princess to marry. Hundreds of jills of all shapes and sizes came to meet the prince. But not one was a princess. Each day was another disappointment. Some had matted fur, dirty ears, or long scraggly nails — surely a princess would be better groomed.

One day he was visited by a ferret so awkward, he suspected she was a mouse.

The prince was positive he could see the strings holding a mask over her eyes.

Yet the eligible jills kept coming, for the prince lived in a very desirable castle with gently swaying hammocks and ocean view litterboxes. "This is not the business to be in," thought the prince. The prince decided to take a long trip to see if he could find a real princess in some other kingdom.

After a year, the prince returned. He had not found a single real princess in all the world, but he had grown weary of sleeping in a travel carrier night after night.

"What shall I do?" he sighed. "Will I never be able to marry?"

"You can't hurry love," said his mother, "you'll just have to wait."

"I'm not looking for love," said the prince, "I just want a real princess!"

Weeks passed and the prince began to get sadder and sadder.

Then one cold and rainy night, a pretty young albino jill appeared at the door to the castle. "Please let me in. I am a real princess and I'm full of dirt. I need a bath!"

"Indeed you do!" said the prince's mother. She let the jill into the house.

After the albino jill had bathed and eaten some crunchies, the prince's mother came to chat with her.

"Are you really a real princess?" she asked.

"Oh, my, yes, I am," said the jill. "I have always been told I am a princess. I must have my litterbox clean as can be or I am compelled to poop next to it."

"I see," said the prince's mother.

"And I must have all my toys in their proper places, or I get into such a tizzy."

"Mmmm," said the prince's mother.

"And if I don't get my treats, I'm impossible."

"Well, that's very interesting," said the prince's mother. She then bid the young jill good night and went to prepare the guest's room.

The prince's mother decided she would find out once and for all if this jill was a real princess, as she said she was. True, all of the behaviors she described were very princess-ly, but they could be an act. So the prince's mother set to prepare a sort of test to find the truth. She hung hammock upon hammock upon hammock for the so-called real princess to sleep on. Then, at the very bottom of the pile of hammocks, she placed a small treat.

If the albino was indeed a real princess, she would be haunted by the notion of the treat all night long. And her son would have a real princess to marry.

The jill got into the hammocks and immediately had the sense that there were treats nearby. She tossed and turned and couldn't sleep all night. All she could do was keep thinking, "A treat! A treat! I'm so good I deserve a treat!" She kept picturing a raisin floating just out of her reach.

The following morning, the prince's mother asked the jill how she had slept.

"Terrible! I couldn't get out of my mind that I deserved a treat. For, after all, I am a princess!"

The prince, upon hearing this, was overjoyed and immediately asked the jill to marry him.

She did. And they lived happily ever after.

The end.

READER ART

The Reader Art Contest!
This issue's featured artist:
Jennifer Strong
of Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Modern Ferret's Mission Statement

Modern Ferret is a bi-monthly color magazine for ferret owners by ferret owners. We are independent and not affiliated with any group or organization. However, we strongly encourage our readers to become involved with and support any local, regional, or national groups/rescues/shelters they choose. *Modern Ferret* promotes the positive image of domestic ferrets as pets by providing a popular forum for the discussion of ferret-related issues. Our editorial focus is the enjoyment of the ferret as a pet. We'll provide ferret-oriented entertainment such as interviews and articles about movies, tricks, photography, traveling, pet care, new products, and more. We'll also serve as a forum for presenting the latest medical information about ferrets—on both the veterinary and pet-owner levels. We'll produce quality products to further promote ferrets as enjoyable and popular pets. We hope to raise the general public's awareness and education level about ferrets as pets by providing a vibrant forum with a visual appeal. Our graphics will try to capture the fun-loving, playful nature of ferrets in every issue. *For ferret owners. By ferret owners.*™

I'LL LICK YOUR NOSE![†]

if

you

†NOTE: Modern Ferret will not be responsible for noses lost or damaged in the mail. Please ship your nose in secure packaging!

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NOTE:
Modern Ferret is intended to be published 6 times a year. We are currently achieving 4 issues a year, but are gradually catching up!

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